

# THE SHAKERITE

VOL. 89 ISSUE II APRIL 26 2019







**Adonis Fryer**

**“What I Learned in Spanish Class” Page 74**

Adonis Fryer is a senior at the high school. He is a member of CORE, the leadership of the Student Group on Race Relations. Fryer is also a drama leader and head script writer for Sankofa. In his Guest 'Rite, Fryer describes his experience in Spanish class sophomore year.



**Brian Elsaesser**

**“Mutual Respect, Mutual Learning” Page 75**

Brian Elsaesser is a social studies teacher at the high school. He has taught for the last 16 years, spending four of those years in Shaker. Elsaesser believes in an environment of mutual respect in the classroom in order to foster learning.



SHAKER HEIGHTS

**NOW HIRING!**

Camp Counselor/Summer Camps

Field Maintenance Supervisor

Field Maintenance Worker

Head Guard/Lifeguards/Learn-To-Swim Instructors

Park Attendant

Pool Cashier/Lead Cashier

**Salaries range from \$8.55 to \$10 per hour!**

Complete the job application at [shakeronline.com](http://shakeronline.com) and submit to [human.resources@shakeronline.com](mailto:human.resources@shakeronline.com). Deadline to apply is April 30.



## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

---

The more I revisit the transcript of the Nov. 8, 2018 meeting, the more absurd it becomes in my mind. As I annotated the transcript for publication, I felt both disheartened by the conflict and amused by the farcical nature of it all.

But, like all great comedies, the meeting exposed issues more efficiently than any other medium could have. The intensity of the meeting also emphasized the urgent nature of those issues.

Although the meeting was originally convened to help the administration communicate to Shaker residents, residents immediately showed that they wanted to be the ones communicating. People felt they weren't being heard.

Throughout the transcript, members of the audience push for answers — to personnel problems, administrative mistakes, racial inequities and more. However much we would like to abandon that meeting, and those problems, to the past, we would be remiss to do so.

The meeting, undoubtedly, proved more destructive than constructive, but the pieces we salvage from the rubble can inspire new growth. With this issue, we're doing our best to hear what the community has said and answer their questions.

For some of these questions, one story is not enough. Racial inequities cannot be solved in a day. But we must initiate these conversations if we're to avoid another explosive meeting in the future. We need to bring these problems to the forefront of our minds so their solutions can be our priority as well.

So, I'll let you continue. The Shakerite staff gives you: The Meeting Issue.



Astrid Braun  
*Editor-in-Chief*



# The Nov. 8 Meeting, Transcribed and Condensed

Astrid Braun Editor-in-Chief  
*Photos by David Vahey*

*The table of contents has been reformatted for the meeting issue. Instead of the traditional layout, the transcript of the Nov. 8 meeting has been condensed and annotated with the page numbers of stories related to the meeting. The full transcript can be found on [shakerite.com](http://shakerite.com). Quick Shakes and unrelated opinion pieces have been excluded from this table of contents and can be found on **page 12** and **page 50**, respectively.*



SCOTT STEPHENS: “I know there are a lot of issues that our high school students, parents and teachers are concerned about tonight, and we want to address them tonight in a civilized coming together and exchanging of information. I also know that because of your commitment to our students’ academic success, some of these issues can become real hot-button issues. And to kind of get the point needed — and passions can run high, we appreciate that, but we respectfully ask that we have a civilized time tonight. We will wrap up the meeting in one hour and we’ll work together to accomplish some things tonight and get some questions answered. I’m joined on stage tonight by two people who I think almost everybody in this room surely knows, Dr. Stephen Wilkins — the district’s interim superintendent, Dr. Wilkins.”

*[Applause]*



“And Dr. David Glasner, who — he wears a lot of hats in the school, but right now is substitute principal here at the high school, filling in for the regular principal. Dr. Glasner, thank you for being here.”

*[Applause]*

“After I’m done just telling you how the floor is going to work tonight, these two gentlemen will make some opening — should be very brief — opening remarks just welcoming you, and then we’ll go directly to questions. We also want to recognize several board members who are here, school board members, that are here with us tonight. We have Jeff Isaacs, the president of the board: Jeff where are you? Heather Weingart, Lisa Cremer and Ayesha Bell Hardaway.”

*[Applause]*

....

The community meeting was initially held to introduce Substitute Principal David Glasner. Former Principal Jonathan Kuehnle was placed on administrative leave pending investigation Nov. 1. Read Print Managing Editor Emet Celeste-Cohen’s investigation of the hiring practices that brought Kuehnle to the district on **page 20**.

Glasner has since been chosen for the position of superintendent. Read the Editorial Board’s open letter to him on **page 46**.

Read Editor-in-Chief Astrid Braun’s interview with Isaacs on **page 58**.



*[STEPHENS takes GLASNER's seat as the latter steps up to the podium to speak]*

GLASNER: “Good evening everybody. My name is Dr. Glasner, I’m here serving as principal at the high school, and I certainly appreciate and understand that emotions are pretty high and people are upset — and that this is not a situation that really any of us envisioned or thought we’d be in when the school year started, or over the past few weeks. I will say, and I’ve said this in a few different communications emails to faculty, that we have an amazing high school. We have amazing high school faculty.”

*[Applause]*

“We have an amazing high school staff, we have amazing high school curriculum and we also have amazing high school students, so let’s give them a big round of applause.”



*[Applause]*

“And I really appreciate that the community, even in these trying circumstances, has certainly welcomed me with open arms. And over the past few weeks I’ve — over the past few days I should say — I’ve had the opportunity to visit classrooms, get to see students, get to meet with teachers, and it’s really great to see that the work and the learning and the teaching at our high school is continuing and is as strong as ever. I know that there is also work that needs to be done, and part of that is building — and in some cases, rebuilding, trust and relationships among our community members, and during my time here, that is certainly a priority. Also, I want to make sure that, no matter what the long-term leadership outcome of this building, that we continue to be set up for long-term success, and that is also work that I will be doing while I am here. It’s been great to see a lot of familiar faces



in the audience tonight, and when I walk the hallways, the students are, in some cases, a few feet taller than the last time I saw them. And I look forward to continuing to being a presence here, to continuing to support our community and our high school, and I look forward to answering some of your questions this evening. Thank you very much.”

....

STEPHENS: “Thank you. Dr. Wilkins, the question you are asked is: You are legally obligated to eventually tell us why Mr. Kuehnle has been placed on leave. When will you tell us that and why haven’t you told us so far?”

*[large audience applause]*

WILKINS: “Well, as we know, Principal Kuehnle is on leave, undergoing a review. That review will take some time. I don’t have a date that that is going to be completed. Once that review is completed, then I’ll make a decision accordingly to move forward from there. At that time, we will certainly let everyone know the way ahead.”

WOMAN *[yelling]*: “How did it get to this situation? How did we get here today?”

ANOTHER WOMAN: “It’s not fair that we don’t know what is going on...

*[Both women yelling at the same time]*

*[STEPHENS moves on to next question]*

....

STEPHENS: “David, again, it goes to the teacher’s relationship in the classroom with their students. ‘How can a teacher initiate a conversation regarding a student’s academic activities and performance if there’s any fear that the conversation can be labeled as bullying?’”

*[STEPHENS is drowned out by audience cheering and murmuring]*

“And if you could reflect on your career as a principal and in various places and situations that you felt —”

*[Audience drowns STEPHENS out again]*

GLASNER: “Well, of course, I know that all of our teachers are invested in the success of our students. And I think that all of our teachers also are very good at having sometimes difficult conversations with our students. I think

Glasner’s reference to students being “a few feet taller” recalls his time as middle school principal. This year, he moved into the position of executive director of curriculum and instruction — before he stepped in as substitute principal and now, superintendent.

The district is not legally obligated to tell the community why Kuehnle was placed on leave nor have they. He was reassigned in early January to a project manager position. Recent publication of his personnel file by local news outlets revealed a litany of complaints about his behavior while he was principal.

Read Investigations Reporters Ashley Sah and Hilary Shakelton’s look into student-teacher relationships in the wake of the Podl investigation on **page 42**.

something that I've always found to be important is ensuring high expectations for our students. And I know that our students are capable of always improving, learning and growing. And in my experience, when a teacher approaches a student from that perspective and in a fair-minded, supportive mentality and approach, there's always positive results."

....

STEPHENS: "Thanks Dr. Glasner. The next question is kind of a long, process question about the football coach situation, Dr. Wilkins, and the coach and staff: What is the process of hiring a football coach — or, I guess, any coach? Who's in charge of that? As the process is for hiring assistant coaches, how did the process break down in your view? That we had an issue with an individual who was acting as an assistant coach and probably the most important, what will we do in order to change that process in terms of personnel and ensuring that our student athletes are safe?"

WILKINS: "Well, we're gonna change that by hiring a new coach."

*[audience starts yelling]*

WOMAN *[in audience]*: "How does a felon get hired?"

WILKINS: "Those questions are all very good questions and at the same time —"

WOMAN *[in audience]*: "Answer them."

*[interrupted by audience shouts]*



WILKINS: "Those are the same types of questions that I asked. And when I talked about with those things that were being investigated, those are the

Jonathan Harrell worked as a volunteer assistant coach for the high school football team, though he had a criminal record. Raider Zone editor Anna Krouse investigated the hiring process for assistant coaches. Read that story on **page 70**.



questions that I want answered. Just like you, when I found out about this situation, I was also surprised. I was extremely disappointed. That we had adults in charge of our most precious asset, our children, make those types of decisions is unacceptable, period.”

“Our students are required to have adults around them who are properly sanctioned and licensed, and we will ensure that that happens in the future.”

AUDIENCE MEMBER: “How?”

WILKINS: “How are we going to go about fixing that?”

AUDIENCE MEMBER: “How?”

WILKINS: “I’m answering your question.”

SECOND AUDIENCE MEMBER: “Well, hurry up!”

*[Laughter]*

WILKINS: “We have drafted a job description and will revise that. I’m working with the athletic director, who is responsible for the interviews of those candidates. Those candidates will be vetted, strictly, and we will raise the standards and expectations of the coaching staff. Stay tuned.”

....

STEPHENS: “A general kind of question I’m going to ask Dr. Glasner, if he can take a stab at it: What can we do as a school to make the experience for African-American students better?”

*[Applause]*

GLASNER: “Sorry, could you repeat part of that question? I missed the end.”

STEPHENS: “Sorry, uh, yeah. The question, Dr. Glasner, was: What can we do as a school to make the experience for African-American students better or improved?”

GLASNER: “There’s a lot of work we need to do as a community in order to make sure that we provide an equitable and high-quality educational experience for all students. Part of that is making sure that the barriers or structures that we have in place — that start early on in our district — that may affect the educational experience of students, including at the high school, that we make sure we’re either removing those barriers or ensuring that we’re providing excellent and equitable structures for students to get up to

Web Managing Editor  
Mae Nagusky  
interviewed African-American students  
about their experiences  
in Shaker schools. Read  
that investigation on  
**page 34.**

the high school. I also think here at the high school, we'll need to make sure that we are treating all students fairly and equitably, and that includes looking at the courses we offer and the educational experiences that we offer for our students. It is a long-term process and a journey that we need to go on. I think the work that we've done with our equity task force and other similar conversations we've had is part of that work, and there's also a lot more that needs to happen."

*[Female student gets on stage with a microphone]*

OLIVIA MCDOWELL *[student]*: "Excuse me, hi, everyone. I'm Olivia McDowell. I'm a junior and I'm the student that they're referring to in that letter."

McDowell was one of the students Nagusky talked to for her story. The letter referenced is one written by SHTA President John Morris, in which he alleges that the district did not provide due process to English teacher Jody Podl.



*[Applause]*

"I don't want to get emotional, but I care about my education. What was said in that letter was not completely true, number one. Number two, why is it about the teacher's feelings? What about the student? [inaudible] care about us so much? [applause drowns her out] Y'all sweep stuff under the rug and act like it just doesn't matter — act like it's not going on. I don't get it. What about the damage to a student when they're, what, one of three, one of five black kids in their class because of the whole education gap that y'all have? And being reprimanded over stuff that's not — they have a B in the class, they're completely acceptable [inaudible]. But somehow, they're still wrong, right? Somehow, they're still not capable, right? Right, am I right?"

McDowell later clarified with The Shakerite that her comments about Podl and about race were not intended to be correlated.

*[Some applause]*

"I've been in Shaker since third grade and nothing has changed ... What's about to happen? ... Plenty of other teachers that are in this room right now, I've heard countless things about. Where's the training? Where's the classes



on equity?”

AUDIENCE MEMBER: “Period!”

*[Applause]*

MCDOWELL: “Giving the lessons and teaching the work and editing essays, or teaching math problems. Where are people’s feelings? You’re supposed to teach children. You’re supposed to build them up — not tear them down each chance that you get.”

*[Applause]*

AUDIENCE MEMBER: “Period!”

*[McDowell walks off the stage]*

STEPHENS: “I’m gonna ask, um, ‘What is the time frame for investigating —”

*[Audience shouts over him]*

*Danielle Krantz, Quinn Cutri, Caroline Brancato, Ana Butze and Ashley Sah assisted in transcribing the meeting.*

Astrid Braun\* *Editor in Chief* Emet Celeste-Cohen\* *Print Managing Editor* Ellie Vahey *Web Managing Editor* Mae Nagusky\* *Web Managing Editor* Emilie Evans\* *Executive Managing Editor* David Vahey *Visuals Managing Editor* Ethan Bloch *Campus and City Editor* Katie Cronin *Campus and City District Reporter* Caroline Brancato *Campus and City Curriculum Reporter* Morgan Fowler *Campus and City Faculty Reporter* Danielle Krantz *Campus and City Community Reporter* Hilary Shakelton *Investigations Budget Reporter* Ashley Sah\* *Investigations Social Issues Reporter* Ainsley Snyder\* *Opinion Editor* Lauren Sheperd\* *Education Columnist* Bailey Pasternak *Social Issues Columnist* Olivia Warren *Curriculum Columnist* Eliza Auten *Spotlight Editor* Ana Butze *Spotlight Editor* Amya Neal *Spotlight Theatre Reporter* Anna Krouse *Raider Zone Editor* Ben Cox *Raider Zone Editor* Ezra Marks *Raider Zone Reporter* Sam Klein *Chief Financial Officer* Alona Miller *In-Class Artist* Quinn Cutri *Chief Copy Editor*

\*Denotes editorial board member. The Shakerite reserves the right to reject or edit any letter to the editor. Disclaimer: opinions expressed in The Shakerite articles are those of their respective authors, and do not represent the views of The Shakerite, Shaker Heights High School or the Shaker Heights City School District. The Shakerite is a public forum published for and by students of Shaker Heights High School. Read The Shakerite online at shakerite.com.

Readers may reach The Shakerite at (216) 295-6210 or by emailing shakeriteserver@gmail.com. The Shakerite is a member of the National Scholastic Press Association and the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

## How to Stay Focused While Studying

Mia Compton-Engle,  
*Journalism II Reporter*

**F**reshman Grace Bourdrez studies every night. After school, homework and dance, she settles into bed for an hour or two of studying. She puts her phone away to minimize distractions and takes breaks.

But she is tired, and studying in bed only makes her want to sleep. “I’m not really motivated to study because usually I feel pretty prepared, and then I just procrastinate studying,” Bourdrez said.

“I still have good grades, but I feel like they could be a lot better if I studied more. I definitely don’t study as much as I should.”

Bourdrez is not alone. High school students today have difficulties staying focused while studying. Seven out of 18 people surveyed by The Shakerite said they have ineffective study habits.

“I maybe complete homework efficiently, but not studying — I’m terrible at studying,” freshman Autumn Roberts said.

Studying methods — unlike homework — are open to interpretation. There are many different ways that students can study, while directions for homework are often straightforward.

Ineffective studying stems from procrastination, distractions, cramming and poor study environments, according to University of the People. Poor studying is an impediment to academic success.

“Most of our grades come from tests, and studying is a big part of that,” Roberts said.

Curriculum and Instruction Technology Specialist Lauren Priestley agrees.



“I’ve started not doing my homework in my bed and I’ve started doing it at a table, and it’s really helping. I get it done quicker and I’m less distracted,” Bourdrez, pictured studying above, said.

“Studying has an impact when the studying is purposeful. Studying can deepen understanding of concepts, help make connections, and prompt student reflection,” she wrote in an email interview.

So, how can one study well?

### **Adopt better organization and time management.**

One of the worst study habits is procrastination. Students put off studying to avoid confronting the material. However, this leads to a lack of preparation — or even worse, cramming.

To prevent procrastination, students should create a to-do list or a study calendar detailing what needs to be done each day preceding the test and presenting a





David Vahey

study plan that is conquerable.

“Designing a plan and executing a study plan makes studying more efficient,” Paychex Inc. Human Resource Consultant Chris Jankus said via phone. Jankus offers a time management lecture at Cleveland State University.

Lists and plans are very important, Priestley wrote. They “help manage time to avoid last-minute cramming” and help ensure sufficient time to attend tutoring or ask questions.

“Organization and time management are key,” intervention specialist Kady Cole said.

Ultimately, it is up

to you to make sure that you are studying. It may seem daunting, but taking the leap to study can be rewarding — both academically and mentally.

### **Eliminate distractions.**

Students are relentlessly exposed to technology. Three quarters of college students surveyed constantly engage with technology while studying, according to an online textbook company study, and 38 percent of them cannot refrain from checking their phones for more than 10 minutes. In an 18-person survey, 83 percent of SHHS students said that they are distracted while studying sometimes, often or always.

To study effectively, put your phone in another room.

“Make sure you are fully focused on your homework and not other things at the same time,” freshman Anna Carpenter said. “Usually my phone’s in the other room so it’s not a distraction.” If you can’t bear to part from your

phone for long, consider rewarding yourself with phone time at certain intervals during your study period.

“Just flipping your phone over doesn’t do anything; you need to put it out of sight,” district intervention specialist Lauren Babcock said.

A University of Connecticut study shows that students who multitask have to study longer and receive lower grades. By eliminating distractions, you stand to complete your work more efficiently and effectively.

### **Plan ahead to study over a longer period of time.**

Cramming may seem like an easy solution to procrastinated studying. But without a good night of sleep, one’s brain doesn’t function as well.

“You’re probably not gonna retain as much information,” Jankus said of cramming.

“Start early — a week before the test — and you don’t have to study for an hour every day; you could study for 10 minutes a day,” Bourdrez advised.

The 18-person survey concluded that the longer students study each night, the less sleep they get. “Sleep deprivation impacts attention, concentration, memory; this impact makes it difficult for the student to receive and organize information effectively,” Priestley explained.

“The longer you [study], it becomes more of your long-term memory, as opposed to just short-term memory when you’re cramming overnight,” Jankus added.

Make one page of notes with the main test points to review the morning of the test. Then, the day before a test, take a break or do something fun.

### **Maximize your study setting.**

“The first thing a student needs to un-

derstand is what environment of studying works best for them,” Cole said. If your study group leads to off-topic discussions, it is better to study separately.

Furthermore, if you often fall asleep where you study on the couch or in your bed, it is likely an ineffective study spot.

“When you’re in your bedroom, what happens? You want to lay in bed and fall asleep,” Babcock explained.

To get the most out of your study time, make sure that you study alone or with someone who will stay on task. Find a place to study with no distractions — this could be your room, a study or a library. If you’re planning on studying for a long time, try switching up the scenery. Communal spaces such as Van Aken’s Market Hall specifically cater to students hoping to grab food while studying.

Jankus advocates studying with peers. “If you’re in the same class, you can do it together, and maybe in your discussion, really solidify your knowledge” Jankus said.

Of course, it is always OK to ask for help, too, Babcock said. “Students should always feel comfortable approaching teachers for help.”

Ultimately, employing these habits ensures more efficient, effective studying. “Recently I’ve started not doing my homework in my bed and I’ve started doing it at a table,” Bourdrez said, “and it’s really helping. I get it done quicker and I’m less distracted.”

## Shaker Switches Athletic Conferences

Erin Williams,  
*Journalism II Reporter*

**T**oday is the big game.

You and your teammates board the bus, and you get as pumped as you can during the 50-minute drive to your Greater Cleveland Conference opponent’s school.

After the long drive and pre-game rituals, the game starts. Shaker scores the first two touchdowns, and you can see that the opposing players, most of whom are white, are starting to feel frustrated.

You make an amazing tackle, and the referee blows his whis-

tle. Out of nowhere, a white player runs past you and calls you, “n—r,” just loud enough for you to hear. You’re shocked.

You tell the nearest ref, and he tells you, “I’ll listen for it.” For the rest of the game you’re not present. Your coach is screaming at you, telling you to get your head in the game, but all you can think about is what just happened.

“What normally happens is, it’s all cool and fun in the beginning until words are said and you get called the N-word a lot by white players. You can just be blocking a person and then, boom, words are said,” senior Jeremiah Caver, a four-year member of the football team, said.

“I’ve been called it with a hard ‘r,’ and I feel like they are just purposely trying to get under your skin and I hate that that is





the way that they try to do it,” Caver said. “Like, kick me, or punch me in the stomach, do something else. That’s degrading. That’s just not OK.”

In the 2019-20 school year, Shaker will leave the GCC because of experiences like this, among other reasons. The Raiders have switched conferences three times since 2011. With their return to the Lake Erie League next year, they hope the fourth time will be the charm.

But what are athletic conferences, and what’s the point of them?

An athletic conference can generally be described as a group of schools that compete athletically. The purpose of the conference is to organize competition regionally, according to a history of Ohio’s Division I sports conferences available at the Ohio High School Athletic Association website.

The OHSAA source states that conferences exist to simplify scheduling. “Instead of having 346 teams scheduled randomly against each other, you have groups of 10 or 12 competing regionally,” the document states. Conferences also make it easier to rank schools.

The document described what it was like before official sports conferences were established. “The earliest days of interscholastic athletics in Ohio’s high schools, most probably starting in the immediate post-Civil War years, were a bit disorganized, to say the least. Boys from one school would get a team together and challenge the boys from a neighboring school. No coaches, no set schedule, no uniforms and probably no practices, either,” the document states.

According to Cleveland 19 News, Shaker was a part of the Lake Erie League for 90 years,



The district gave three reasons for the switch: First, it would reduce travel times; second, it would reduce the number of racially-charged incidents that the GCC was prone to; and third, it would improve overall athletic competitiveness.

Senior Jeremiah Caver said, “I’ve been called it with a hard ‘r’ and I feel like they are just purposely trying to get under your skin and I hate that that is the way that they try to do it. Like kick me, or punch me in the stomach, do something else.”

then the Northeast Ohio Conference for three years before switching to the Greater Cleveland Conference. The district endorsed the move from the NOC to the GCC because the NOC was falling apart. In a 2015 article about the switch, Athletic Director Don Readance told The Shakerite that “the move to form the GCC was basically out of necessity. We didn’t really have too many options; the NOC was basically breaking and there were a lot of schools going in different directions.”

Shaker will move from the GCC to the LEL in the 2020 school year. Shaker, Euclid, Mentor, Strongsville, Solon, Brunswick, Medina and Elyria are currently in the GCC, while the LEL comprises Bedford, Cleveland Heights, Lorain, Maple Heights, Shaw, Warrensville Heights and Lutheran East.

“I think it’s a good thing. I mean, we will win more games,” senior volleyball player Simone Harris said. For the 2018 season, the volleyball team’s record was 1-13 inside the GCC and 2-17 overall.

To explain the return to the LEL, the district released a statement declaring “The purpose of this change is to improve overall athletic competitiveness, reduce travel costs, and better support the socio-emotional development of our students. The change allows some sports greater flexibility to schedule out-of-conference games while other sports are not impacted at all.” Sports not affected are ice hockey, field hockey and club sports, all of which compete in Ohio leagues organized for those sports.

Allan Slawson, head women’s and men’s tennis coach and retired math teacher, said that the return to the LEL will help athletes manage time. “If you travel for one hour, play for two hours and then travel for another hour, you just shot your whole evening, so that part of



David Vahey

it makes sense,” Slawson said.

Excluding GCC member Euclid, which is a 19-minute drive from Shaker Heights, the average trip to a GCC away game is 41 minutes. Excluding LEL member Lorain, which is a 55-minute drive from Shaker Heights, the average trip to an LEL away game is 16 minutes long.

Slawson also supports the switch because he believes that African-American athletes shouldn't have to be subjected to racially hostile opponents. Slawson's friend has a son who plays for Solon, a school in the GCC. "His son was called a 'Punk a— n—r,' and he told one of the coaches on the other team. There's been a follow up, and they'll go through a principal and athletic director and punishment will be assigned, but that doesn't stop the negative outbursts from competing athletes."

Caver said he feels terrible when he hears such slurs. "Especially when I know that there are refs that are supposed to be able to control stuff like that, but they don't," he said. "I know it's football and all, but I feel kind of unsafe in the way — not, like, athletically unsafe — but I feel unsafe with my environment."

Though Slawson, who grew up in Parma, said he knows how similar communities think and feel about race, he believes that it's not Shaker's responsibility to try and fix them.

"He probably hasn't changed his mentality, but maybe he just doesn't say it so he doesn't get in trouble again," he said of the

player who insulted his friend's son. "But that doesn't mean that the next guy with the same mindset won't do it again."

Raider athletes worry about how competition will change.

"I don't like it because I feel like the soccer teams in the new division aren't very good, so we won't have any real competition," said freshman Maya Miller, a member of the soccer team.

Adrienne Johnson, a freshman member of the swim team, is conflicted about the move. "Most of them don't have good swim teams. We are a pretty competitive swim team, ranked third in our conference, so there won't be any competition. But at the same time, my friends have gotten called racial slurs," Johnson said.

"I think I'm gonna hate track season because I actually like the GCC, especially the big meet at the end of the year," said Eyan Bryant, a freshman on the indoor track team. He's also disappointed that he won't be able to hang out with his friends from other GCC schools during meets.

However, he changed his view after learning why the district chose to return to the LEL. "Now, I do support the switch because I don't feel like being discriminated against when I go to other schools like Brunswick," Bryant said.

Freshman Autumn Roberts, a member of the volleyball team said, "I don't really care, I don't think it matters. You get into a sport to play; it doesn't really matter who you're playing."

## Listening Through the Generations

Will Welsh,  
*Journalism II Reporter*

**T**he cafeteria is abuzz, per usual. Junk food wrappers litter the floor. It smells of disinfectant and knock-off Chipotle. Eight students gather around a table, hunched over Cheetos and Pop Tarts.

Half of the kids are listening to music, and the other half are eating silently or attempting and failing to start a conversation. Instead of engaging with their peers, these four kids are engaged in music and look as if they're miles away.

Students have mixed opinions about using earbuds or headphones in public places, but more than half of students interviewed by The Shakerite agree that they can eliminate or hinder conversation. "They're more focused on the music than talking to you," freshman Brody Wein-furtnner said.

Since the invention of earbuds and music streaming, kids have constant access to millions of songs. This is clear during sixth period lunch at the high school every day. For every student actively engaging with peers, another is listening to music in some way. Most use AirPods or traditional earbuds. The number of music listeners seems to make conversation difficult — and the



Emet Celeste-Cohen

cafeteria much quieter than expected.

In the age of AirPods and Spotify, music tastes have become individualized. No two people are interested in the same few artists anymore, and fewer students listen to music aloud, together. The Shakerite explored the effects of this newfound musical isolation and freedom.

The modern age of music consumption began in 1877 with Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph — the first machine that played music from a recording. In the last 140 years, music consumption has evolved at a rate never seen before. Phonographs turned into gramophones, which became record players, and record players gave way to 8-track tapes. Those soon became cassette tapes that gave rise to the Sony Walkman and then, when CDs arrived, the Discman. Those personal music players inspired the iPod, which soon popularized earbuds. Now, most Apple products are compatible with wireless AirPods.



"The issue is when people equate what they hear on produced albums as reality," choir teacher Mario Clopton-Zymler said. "Albums are produced to create the most perfect product. Live music is there just to experience music in real time."

In the past, music fans would have to wait months for new music to come out on CD (or whatever form was prevalent), and even then it was hard to get it, let alone listen to it. "Only people that could go stand in line for an hour could hear an album the day it was dropped," sophomore rap fan Paul Huang said. Now, with music streaming, music enthusiasts and casual listeners can jam out to almost any song anywhere.

The two most popular music platforms, Spotify and Apple Music, charge customers \$9.99 per month. Subscriptions allow customers access to music, radio and podcasts curated by the services. The apps also suggest songs to users based on their listening habits and information they provide when they sign up. Although music platforms offer these means to expand musical tastes, not all users take advantage.

"I switch around from time to time, but I'm listening to rap right now," freshman Post Malone fan Gage Weingart said. Even though people can listen to almost any



song whenever they want, most students interviewed said their favorite genre is rap, and their favorite artists include Travis Scott, Playboi Carti and Ski Mask The Slump God.

This musical freedom has fueled music consumption. According to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, 38.4 percent of global music revenue in 2017 came from streaming, and total revenue increased by 8.1 percent as well.

Although the music industry is growing, the live music experience may be becoming less appealing compared to the perfected recorded music that people listen to constantly.

“Live music isn’t appreciated as much,” Huang said. He said that a negative of streaming is that live performances are not as special today because of auto-tune and on-demand access to music.

Does listening to flawless digital music on high-end earbuds or headphones create unrealistic expectations for live music?

“The issue is when people equate what they hear on produced albums as reality. Albums are produced to create the most perfect product. Live music is there just to experience music in real time,” choir teacher Mario Clopton-Zymler said. He thinks that in order to appreciate live music, listeners must come to a venue expecting it to sound different than the recorded version.

The average person now has more music at their fingertips than their parents might have

had in their lifetime. But, too much of anything can be bad. Does the same go for listening to music alone?

Before streaming music and using earbuds became the norm, people often listened to music aloud — and together — in the car, during class, on the bus on the way to the game, during club or activity meetings. They sang along with favorite songs, and they worked out what to listen to next together. These social experiences and skills are not frequently practiced when you get to choose exactly what song you want to hear all the time.

History teacher Andrew Glasier recalls arguing with his sister about what CD, tape or radio station to listen to in the car. “It was a big thing,” Glasier said. He said such arguments are a thing of the past. “I don’t think you have to negotiate anymore because now you can choose whatever you want anytime,” he said.

Live music offers an important human element that is not experienced when listening alone. English teacher Dr. John Morris frequently attends concerts. He said experiencing music together is uniquely valuable. “That energy that a crowd brings, [when] they’re all singing along to the chorus of a song, and the artist steps back from the microphone, and you can hear an entire crowd of people singing the same lyrics, is pretty collectively gratifying,” he said.

Morris concluded, “There’s just an electricity in seeing live music with an audience.”

## When Silence is Louder than Speech

Vivian Bowling,  
*Journalism II Reporter*



**W**hen freshman Emerie Anderson was in seventh grade, she joined other middle school students in remaining silent one April day in 2017.

Anderson’s vow to remain silent was inspired by her wish for “men to understand that women are not objects.”

“To take my vow of silence, it really meant a lot to me, because I felt like I was changing the world just a little bit,” Ander-

son said. "And it really made impacts on others because they realized Emerie silent is not a good Emerie, because I like to say things."

Anderson and classmates took a vow of silence to draw attention to sexual violence and sexual abuse of women; it occurred in April of their 7th grade year and was led by a group of teachers.

Other students are wary about taking a vow of silence. Freshman Emma Murray said she hasn't taken a vow of silence and won't. "I value my words; people need to hear what I have to say," she said.

Someone who takes a vow of silence promises not to speak (and in some cases not to communicate at all) for a designated

amount of time. Such efforts have been used by religions for years. Catholic organizations offer retreats that are completely silent with the goal of becoming closer to god. Vows of silence are also commonly practiced in Judaism and Hinduism. Monks and nuns practice limited speech — they only talk in necessary situations.

In the past few decades, people taking vows for political reasons are increasing. The first large political vow of silence was done by a group of students at the University of Virginia in 1996 for gay rights. It became sponsored by the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network, an organization that supports

LGBTQ+ rights, in 2001. GLSEN refers to this event as a "Day of Silence" and it takes place every year in April. Their biggest event to date was in 2016 with more than 10,000 people registered as participating.

The third most popular reason for a vow of silence is for personal reasons such as stress or the feeling of complaining too much.

According to psychcentral.com, being silent for a minimum of two hours can allow new brain cells to reform in the hippocampus because they have time to completely rest. Staying silent also allows tension to leave the body.

Junior Cecilia Zagara said she would consider taking a vow. "Maybe, if I believe in something so much so," she said.

Social Studies teacher Kyle Fleming said he has had a few students take a vow of silence and they usually give him a letter about their plans before hand. All of his students thus far have done it for political reasons, such as Day of Silence in April.

Social Studies teacher Paul Kelly said he has never taken a vow of silence. The closest he has gotten is "a 30-hour fast I didn't finish." All of his students who have vowed silence have done it for the Day of Silence, which occurred this year on April 12.

Anderson said she understands not everyone can take a vow because it's hard to be silent for a day. She alerted all of her teachers before participating, but "they still called on [me]; it was really hard," Anderson said.

"I was like, 'Why do these men keep on calling on me when they know I should be silent?' " she said. She only remembers breaking the vow once because she had to use the restroom.

Anderson said vowing silence was very empowering. She said, "Knowing that I could be part of hundreds of women in doing this together, it really just made me feel good."



Emet Celeste-Cohen

A vow of silence involves someone committing to abstain from talking or, in some cases, communicating with others at all, for a set amount of time. More than 10,000 people participated in the national Day of Silence in April.



# HOW DID WE GET HIM?

*An investigation  
into the hiring  
practices that  
brought Kuehnle  
to Shaker*

Emet Celeste-Cohen  
Print Managing Editor

“In five years, I see myself in Shaker. In seven years, I see myself in Shaker. In 10 years, I see myself in Shaker,” Jonathan Kuehnle said, addressing an audience of 40 or so community members. It was a Monday evening — March 7, 2016. The search for a high school principal was nearing its end, and Kuehnle was one of two finalists for the job.

Three years after that promise, Kuehnle has been reassigned to a “project manager” position, and the district is in the middle of another principal search. How did Shaker end up here?

To answer this question effectively, one can’t look at Kuehnle’s tenure in a vacuum. The beginning of this story goes back further than that — to the search. Or, more accurately, the search before Kuehnle’s search.

Few current students remember the failed 2015 principal search. Those who attended the high school at the time have graduated. Parents have moved on. Other crises have diverted our attention. But this is where the story starts.

On April 13, 2015, Michael Griffith, who had been principal for 15 years, announced his resignation. “I know that there will be challenges in the transition ahead, but there is no place that is stronger, more caring, and more committed to students than Shaker Heights High School,” he wrote in a letter to the community. “The faculty, staff and parents will persist and continue to create a school community that is a beacon of excellence for all students.”



Griffith soon became head of the Lillian and Betty Ratner Montessori School in Pepper Pike, where he's remained since.

The district decided to select a finalist to fill his place by June 5, 2015. Former Superintendent Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr. oversaw the search and hired the search firm Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates to help. HYA is the same search firm that brought Hutchings to Shaker in 2013 and his executive team in the following years. The HYA website lists completed searches. That list includes Shaker searches that netted Dr. Terri Breeden as assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, Dr. Stephen Wilkins as assistant superintendent of business and operations, John Rizzo as director of technology, Lynne Kulich as director of curriculum, and Dr. David Glasner as middle school principal. Kulich has since resigned. So has Hutchings, who returned to Alexandria City Public Schools as superintendent in 2018. The other four remain.

This same search firm that conducted all the executive searches during Hutchings' tenure was hired again for the high school principal search in 2015. HYA is based in Schaumburg, Illinois, but it employs 119 associates across the nation. According to their LinkedIn profiles, some of these associates occupy other

**Jonathan Kuehnle, then an applicant for high school principal, addresses the audience at a March 7, 2016 community meeting. Photo by The Shakerite.**





full-time jobs. Many are former superintendents or administrators.

When a district contracts with HYA, an associate or team of associates is chosen to represent it. Shaker was assigned Ted Blaesing, an associate based in Florida. He began working at HYA in 2003. At the time he was conducting Shaker's principal search in 2015, he was also operating his own company, Ted Blaesing LLC, with the purpose of "leading and conducting studies for colleges, universities and school districts to include efficiency studies and smoothing the transition between 12th grade and the 1st year of college," according to the company website.

Blaesing started his company in 2008 after leaving the superintendency of a Minnesota school district, which he had occupied for 15 years.

Blaesing had assisted Shaker with searches before. He'd lead the searches for other central administrators and the middle school principal. He couldn't remember the specifics of these searches, but he said that every search employs a common framework.

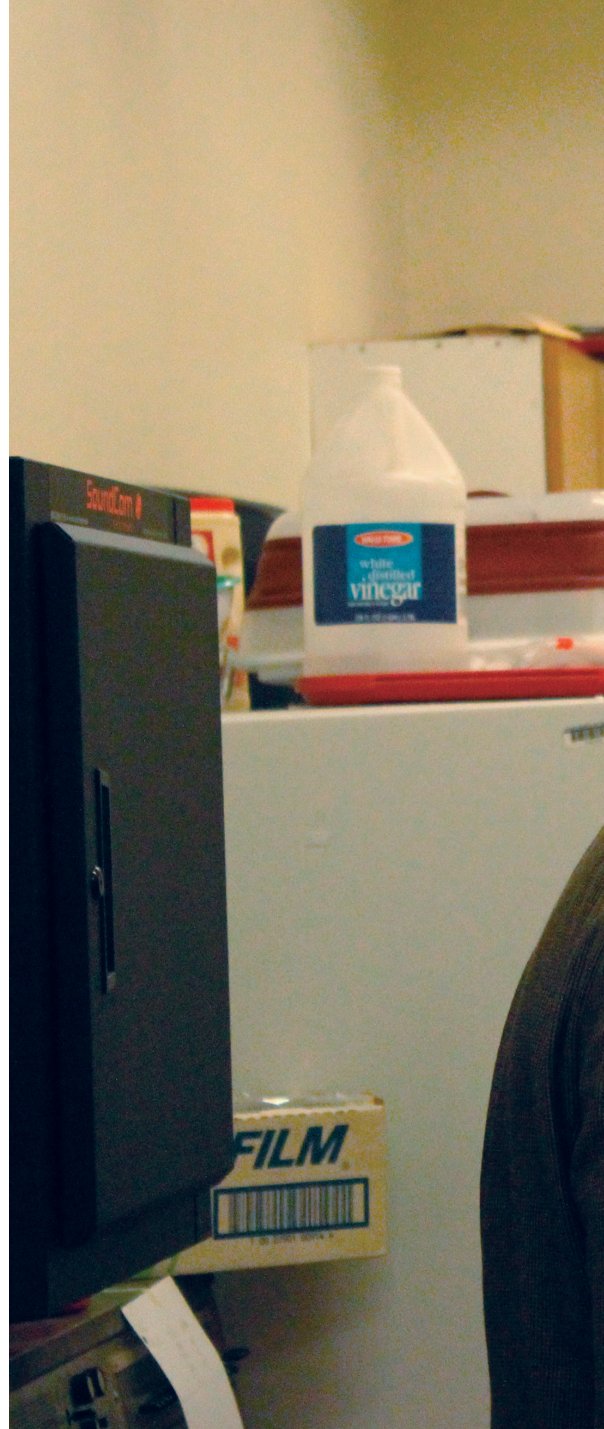
"If you think of a search, there are four major phases to it," he said: engagement, recruitment, selection and transition. These phases are standard to most search firms, not just HYA. Ryan Ray of the search firm Ray and Associates, which conducted Shaker's 2019 superintendent search yielding David Glasner, described a similar procedure.

According to Blaesing, engagement involves convening community forums and town hall meetings, conducting interviews and administering surveys. All are aimed at discerning "common points — recurring themes — that lead to what we refer to as the leadership profile," he said.

The leadership profile is essential to the search. The firm uses it to identify potential candidates. "That's guiding your work. That's a template that you hold the candidates against," Blaesing said.

After Griffith resigned, Blaesing and the district began to make a leadership profile. Their engagement comprised two public sessions, held April 22-23, 2015, and an online survey. Blaesing had until May 15 to complete the recruitment and screening phases before presenting between three and five principal candidates to the Board of Education on May 18. On-site interviews with the top two candidates took place May 27-28, and a finalist was scheduled to be selected June 5. That finalist was Gene Jones, then the principal of George Washington High School in Philadelphia.

During the application process, Jones had revealed to HYA that misdemeanor assault and felony property destruction charges were filed against him and dropped in 2010. According to Dr. John Morris, Shaker Heights Teachers' Association President, HYA "did not include this information on his paperwork that went to the interviewing committee." Morris was a member of that committee.



In an interview with the Shakerite at the time, Morris blamed HYA. "I expect them to come up with a pretty extensive statement on their oversight," he said.

A Shakerite story about the search included an update posted to shaker.org that has since been taken off the website. It stated,





“On the evening of June 3, the final candidate for the position of principal at Shaker Heights High School withdrew his application. Due to the candidate’s decision, the district will not post the community informational session video for feedback. We will be announcing our plans for the appointment of an interim principal for the high school in the days ahead, as well as the timeline for

filling the position on a permanent basis.”

Retired Cleveland Heights High School Principal James Reed III, a 1971 SHHS graduate, accepted the role of interim principal for the 2015-16 school year, and HYA began again. But this time, they skipped the engagement phase. Hutchings wrote in his report to the board Jan. 12, 2016 that HYA would be “using

**As one of two finalists in March 2016, Kuehnle toured the school district. Here he’s pictured with then-Interim Principal James Reed III. Photo by The Shakerite.**

the leadership profile report compiled in May 2015,” the same one used to find Jones.

In addition to the shaker.org announcement about Jones’ with-



drawal, the leadership profile has also disappeared. According to Treasurer Bryan Christman, the district's designated recipient for public records requests, the report "does not appear to fall within the guidelines of a required maintained document." He said he looked for it and could not find a copy.

The leadership profile is absent from any board documents. On shaker.org, an old link to the report yields a "page not found" error. Blaesing said he did not keep a copy, either.

For reference, The Shakerite looked at the leadership profile generated by Ray and Associates for the recent superintendent search yielding Glasner. It is a two-page document. The first page gives background on the district.

It begins by stating, "The Shaker Heights City School District has always been a trailblazer in education excellence," and it goes on to discuss the International Baccalaureate Programme, music, theatre and arts offerings and enrollment. The second page presents a list of 10 characteristics the district sought in the next superintendent, including a leader who "is a strong communicator," "is an instructional leader with considerable classroom experience" and "is comfortable leading innovation and reform."

"Some folks will say, 'Well, isn't that kind of generic? I mean, isn't that true from school to school?'" Blaesing said. "And it's not. It's very, very different. You know, being a high school principal at Shaker Heights is very different

from being a high school principal in different communities."

Using the leadership profile from the first principal search, HYA began again. Their deadline to complete recruitment and screening was Feb. 1, 2016.

Blaesing said there are two main ways to recruit candidates. First, there's advertising. HYA posts all of its active searches on its website. It also posts openings on the American Association of School Administrators' site, where administrative openings across the nation are compiled.

The second is active recruiting. "Normally what happens, at least with us, is we're reaching out to other associates within the firm, you know — who do they know that might be a good match for this position? And you pick up





the phone and start calling people,” Blaesing said.

“So, to give you an example,” he continued, “this just happened yesterday: I know an associate that’s in Colorado, and he’s looking for a superintendent at a specific school district in Colorado. He called me because he thought I might be familiar with two people who have expressed interest in the position, both of whom are in Minnesota, and I spent a good part of my career in Minnesota. So did I know him? Ehh, I knew the one by reputation, didn’t really know him all that well. But I knew others that did know them pretty well, so I contacted them and then got back to my friend in Colorado and told him. So, that’s kind of the recruitment phase.”

Blaesing didn’t know the pro-

portion of SHHS principal candidates who were identified through active recruitment versus those who found the advertisement on their own.

Ray described the process his firm, Ray and Associates, uses for active recruiting: “One of our associates — I’m just giving an example — could be in the Seattle, Washington area, and he knows somebody who might be a perfect fit for what your board is seeking. So, he’s going to go out to him and say, ‘Hey, you need to take a look at this job. It could be good for your career. It fits exactly what you are and your experiences in the past.’ And that person could say, ‘Hey, you know what, I’ll take a look at it.’ And then our associate will follow up and say, ‘Hey have you taken a look at it? You

really need to take a look at it and give it some good thought.’ ”

“So, it’s not just advertising out in the paper somewhere. It’s actually going and talking to people, letting them know that they could be a perfect fit for something and then following up.”

Ray said his firm attends state and national conventions and recruits there as well. “For example, AASA hosts the Superintendents’ Association Conference... And so, we will go and be recruiting at that venue,” he said.

The leadership profile is essential to this phase, Ray said. “We send that profile out to our 160

**During his tour of the school district, Kuehnle also met with current IB coordinator John Moore. Photo by The Shakerite.**



associates and say, 'Do you know somebody who might fit this profile?' ”

Kuehnle enters the story during this recruitment phase. It is unclear when he submitted his application. The Shakerite requested Kuehnle's Shaker personnel file Dec. 31, 2018. Included in the file was Kuehnle's application for the high school principalship. A "terms and conditions" paragraph at the end of the application confirms that it was made via the HYA online application. At the top of the document, a "Date last submitted" field indicates the application was last submitted Feb. 7, 2016. However, the deadline for applications to Shaker was Feb. 1. HYA representatives wouldn't elaborate on whether "Date last submitted" was the last date Kuehnle sent the application to any district or the date he submitted it to Shaker.

The first screen of the HYA online application presents a list of all active searches. Candidates can choose to submit their applications to no more than five of them. Subsequent application screens require candidates to list former jobs, references, honors and more. Only the final two questions require extended responses: "Please share why you are interested in this position and your unique qualifications for it" and "Please list the five accomplishments in your professional career of which you take the greatest satisfaction and why you do so." The questions and their answer fields appear again for each posi-

tion the applicant selected.

Candidates who are applying for more than one job at once see a notification before they are allowed to answer the extended response questions: "You should change your responses to reference the district to which you are responding. Be sure to copy and

**“While I look forward for the opportunity to build on Shaker Heights’ tradition of excellence, I am concerned about the school’s graduation rate.”**

**Jonathan Kuehnle**  
*Former Principal*

paste your text into the new response field before making changes.”

Kuehnle's full application and his responses to these questions are kept in his personnel file. "I am interested in this position

because I truly enjoy serving as a high school principal, and I am impressed by what I have learned about Shaker Heights,” he wrote. “I believe my capabilities will fit very well with the needs and the culture of Shaker Heights. While I look forward for the opportunity to build on Shaker Heights’ tradition of excellence, I am concerned about the school’s graduation rate.”

At the time, Shaker's five-year graduation rate was 94.6 percent, up 3.6 percent from 2014. The four-year graduation rate was also on the rise: It had increased from 87.5 percent in 2014 to 91.6 percent in 2016.

“I believe it is possible to improve the graduation rate through a tried-and-true, multi-faceted approach that I have employed with success at three other districts,” Kuehnle continued in his application. It is unclear which three other districts he's describing. Most recently he had been campus director at Springfield City Schools in central Ohio. Before that he was a "grants administrator" for Pickaway County Educational Service Center. ESCs exist in all Ohio counties and support constituent school districts with professional development and help in enacting government-mandated education reform; they are not affiliated with any one district.

Kuehnle was principal of Circleville High School from 2008 to 2011. From 2006 to 2008, he was an assistant principal and "co-athletic director" at Wellston City Schools. Before that, he was



a social studies teacher in the Northwest Local School District for six years.

The Ohio Department of Education publishes graduation rates beginning in 2014, an interval that covers most of Kuehnle's tenure at Springfield. The four-year graduation rate there did improve from 2014 to 2015, from 72.8 percent to 76.6 percent, but it declined to 75.4 percent by 2016.

"As Campus Director of Springfield High School," Kuehnle wrote in response to the second HYA extended response question, "I am proud of the fact that I have led a team responsible for improving the climate of the school; instilling a culture of professional collaboration and data-driven instruction among the staff; deploying nearly 2,000 laptops (with accompanying professional development) to students and staff; and improving the graduation rate; and increasing enrollment."

According to the ODE, Springfield High School's enrollment declined from 1,760 in 2013-14 to 1,612 in 2015-16. Springfield High School was the only school Kuehnle had worked at with an enrollment greater than 1000.

"I take great satisfaction in these accomplishments," Kuehnle wrote, "because I have been able to achieve them (in various forms) not just in Springfield, but also in Circleville and Wellston."

Kuehnle's HYA application includes one other point of interest: He was referred to the Shaker Heights High School principalship by David Estrop.

Estrop is an HYA associate. According to his LinkedIn profile, he's worked for the firm since

**Then-Principal Jonathan Kuehnle shakes hands with a high school teacher before an Oct. 16, 2016 meeting. Photo by The Shakerite.**



August 2015. He was also the superintendent of Springfield City Schools when Kuehnle was hired there in 2013. Estrop left Springfield in 2015, a year before

Kuehnle applied to Shaker. According to Ray's and Blaesing's explanations of how recruitment proceeds, all HYA associates would have received the SHHS principal leadership profile. One



matched Kuehnle to it. That associate would have, in effect, said, “Hey, you need to take a look at this job. It could be good for your career.”

Reached by email and asked to comment on his role in HYA principal searches, Estrop declined to be interviewed for this story.

After being informed about the job and filling out an application, Kuehnle became part of the SHHS principal applicant pool. Blaesing couldn’t commit to an average size of such a pool for a principal search. “I have to tell you, if I told you 40, that’d be a nice number,” he said. “But that 40 doesn’t really mean a lot until you look at how many are actually legitimate, good, bona fide candidates. And maybe there’s only five. Or maybe there’s 15 within that 40; that’s very different. So to just use a blanket number is just really hard.”

Asked to estimate the largest pool he’s ever screened for a principal search, however, Blaesing could name a number: 48. Shaker’s 2015 principal search, yielding Jones of Philadelphia, included “approximately 38 candidates,” according to shaker.org.

However, Hutchings’ April 25, 2016 letter to the community announcing his choice for principal claimed Kuehnle had “emerged as the strongest of more than 100 applicants from 24 states, the District of Columbia and India.”

Director of Communications Scott Stephens said of the discrepancy, “This is what we were

**Reed shows principal candidate Jonathan Kuehnle around the high school main office May 13, 2016. Photo by The Shakerite.**





told, and that's what we communicated. I'm not sure why we would make up a number."

The Alexandria City Public Schools communications director declined an interview on Hutchings' behalf.

So, with "more than 100 applicants" at the end of the recruitment phase, HYA began the third phase of the search: screening.

Screening comprises background checks and interviews. "Your screening interviews might spread over two weeks, three weeks," Blaesing said. They are usually conducted over the phone or Skype. The leadership profile is used extensively during this phase as well. "If the profile report says we're looking for someone to really move the needle on curriculum and instruction, on test scores, or on a specific aspect of test scores, then we'll ask a question about that," Blaesing continued.

In addition to the interviews, Blaesing said HYA does a few other things to narrow down the field. "We do what everybody else does. You know, we Google them and see what that turns up," he said.

"And then, if the candidate is from another part of the country that maybe you're not familiar with, that's when you call another associate," Blaesing continued. "And so, a friend of mine, Brad, lives in Virginia. If we have a candidate from Virginia or from somewhere right in that vicinity on the East Coast, I'll call him and say, 'Brad, what do you know about so-and-so and what do you

know about this school district?'"

The HYA website offers more detail. "HYA incorporates executive due diligence in the search process," it states. "Two packages

**"I'll call him and say, 'Brad, what do you know about so-and-so and what do you know about this school district?'"**

**Ted Blaesing**  
*HYA Associate*

are offered...comprehensive and basic." The comprehensive package includes a "news media" and "social media" review.

Stephens would not say which package Shaker purchased for the 2016 principal search that yielded Kuehnle.

Both packages include standard background checks of criminal record history, education licensure information, degree verification and so on. However, there is no commitment to analyze applicants' performance evaluations or disciplinary records from former districts, all of which are part of any applicants' personnel files.

The Shakerite requested via email Kuehnle's personnel files from five districts that previously employed him and received the documents from four of them within 10 business days of the requests. The fifth is in Maryland, where state law exempts the release of documents to out-of-state requestors.

According to his Springfield personnel file, Kuehnle was reassigned Feb. 16, 2016 from his position as campus director. His salary didn't change. "You are reassigned to the Dome in office 153, to research special projects related to digital badging and other forms of assessing and acknowledging student learning in the non-traditional educational settings," the superintendent wrote in a Feb. 12, 2016 letter. "Please remove all personal belongings from your office at Springfield High School and provide me with a list of your daily job duties, via email, by the end of the day on Monday, February 15, 2016."

The Dome is a regional educational facility owned and operated by Springfield City Schools that offers students the chance "to develop skills through hands-on real-world experience with experts in a variety of fields." The facility's website includes a promotional video in which students repair engines, create and record music, practice woodworking, weld bicycle frames and build a robot.

The letter from the superintendent cites "reorganization and consolidation of administrative functions" as the reason for the

reassignment.

By the time he was reassigned to the Dome, Kuehnle had already applied to Shaker. He wasn't campus director of Springfield High School when he was named a finalist for the high school principalship.

And yet in an April 25, 2016 letter announcing Kuehnle as principal, Hutchings stated Kuehnle was "currently Campus Director at Springfield High School." Asked why the district used this incorrect information in the release, Stephens said, "We were given the information from the search firm about the background. It's in résumés, it's in things of that nature. That's what we followed." It's possible that supplementary information given to the district by HYA claimed Kuehnle was still campus director, but the résumé portion of his application, which the district also received and which is included in his personnel file, states that he'd left the campus director job in January 2016.

Two personnel files from Kuehnle's previous Ohio districts included records of disciplinary incidents.

In November 2001, while working as an eighth-grade social studies teacher at Colerain Middle School in the Northwest Local School District, Kuehnle was suspended without pay for a day for "inappropriate use of physical force in breaking up a student fight." A letter from the principal forwarded to his personnel file stated, "While your decision to intervene and take appropriate action to stop this assault was cor-

rect and warranted, your striking of the student was unprofessional and inappropriate. You were the adult in this situation and you are expected to use better judgement and proper restraint."

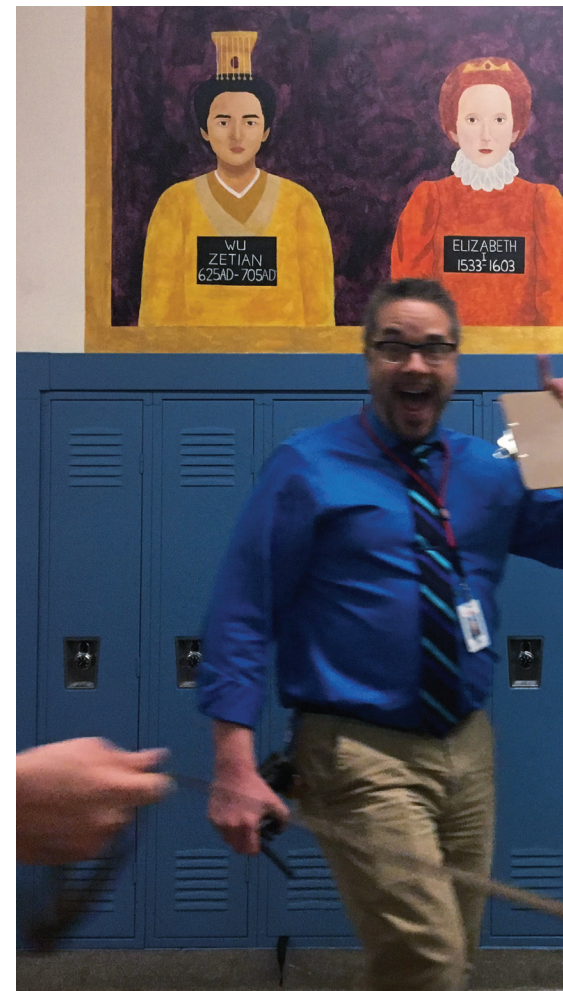
In his explanation of the event, Kuehnle stated, "I continue to aver that I did NOT strike [redacted] face, although I can see how others at the scene could have misinterpreted my clapping [redacted] on the shoulder for a slap at his face."

Stephens would not say whether the district was aware of the suspension before hiring Kuehnle.

In December 2003, Kuehnle was investigated for comments he made to an eighth-grade student during class. A letter from the principal stated, "The comment you made to [redacted] in front of the whole class, was not appropriate. This language is damaging and is counter to building respectful and productive relationships with our students and parents.

"In the future, I direct you to not use sarcasm and or comments that include sexual meanings when interacting with your students," he continued.

Kuehnle was also formally reprimanded three times while at Colerain Middle School for not wearing appropriate dress to school. In one instance, according to an Aug. 27, 2004 letter from the principal, he "wore a T-shirt to school with the following words printed on its front: I'm An Arrogant Bastard. Important to note is that the '6th Grade/New Stu-



dent Schedule Pick-Up' program was occurring at this time."

While principal of Circleville High School, Kuehnle was reprimanded after receiving five scores of one out of four on an administrative evaluation. The standards he failed to meet included providing "positive direction when in a leadership role," adhering to "district adopted guidelines," participating and attending "meetings and extracurricular events/activities," fostering "positive relationships among staff by maintaining open and effective lines of communication" and serving "as a role model for the leadership behaviors you seek to instill in others."





**Then-Principal Jonathan Kuehnle waves at the Shakerite newsroom during a stay in place drill April 11, 2018. Visible in the photo is a police dog leash. Photo by Emily Montenegro.**

The Shakerite could not confirm whether these documents were ever shown to the district by HYA or whether the district requested them while considering Kuehnle's candidacy. Asked whether Hutchings looked at such files before making his decision, Stephens replied, "I don't know. There was a search firm that did the review, and I'm not privy to the search firm's background on it or their records."

After a final candidate has been selected, in this case Kuehnle, the transition phase begins.

fied Kuehnle as campus director of Springfield High School. The release included other discrepancies. It stated that the search process included a "unanimous recommendation from an interview panel made up of teachers, parents and administrators."

However, a letter sent only to teachers and staff stated that he'd "received a unanimous recommendation as a finalist from an interview panel made up of teachers, parents and administrators." The letter sent to the community

"So, once you have a preferred candidate," said Blaesing, "then you have to work on making certain that there's agreement on a contract, you know, putting together the announcement on who the candidate's going to be, putting together starting dates, all those kinds of things on the transition."

Neither HYA nor district sources would say who wrote the announcement about Kuehnle's selection. That announcement, signed by Hutchings, was the same one that misidenti-

omitted the phrase "as a finalist." Teachers protested that the community letter suggested that the panel had recommended Kuehnle to be the next principal.

"The problem with the version that went out to the community is that it makes it sound like the teachers unanimously recommended Kuehnle," Morris said at the time, "while we know in fact that more than 80 percent of the staff chose Reed over Kuehnle." This preference was reflected in the open letter to the administration the SHTA posted on Facebook March 7 recommending that Interim Principal Reed be retained.

"We want to assume that was a typographical error, but it would be unfortunate if the message was changed for the two audiences," Morris said. "We expect the best. We hope for the best."

Stephens stated at the time that there was no difference between the two messages. "The letter to the staff is naturally different than the one to the community and the news release to the media because they are aimed at different constituencies," he stated. "There is no discrepancy. This hiring process has been transparent, fair and inclusive. It is disingenuous to imply otherwise."

Kuehnle was SHHS principal for two years and the start of a third before, on Nov. 1, 2018, he was placed on administrative leave pending investigation. On Jan. 9, 2019, he filed a notice of resignation and was reassigned to a non-specific "project manager" position for the remainder





**Jonathan Kuehnle poses for a photo in his office during the spring of his first year as principal. Photo by Grace Lougheed.**

of his contract, which expires at the end of the 2018-19 school year. Soon after his resignation and reassignment, Kuehnle sought employment elsewhere. Yellow Springs High School, in a quiet suburb of Dayton, needed a principal. Kuehnle was one of 22 applicants for the job. Then, after a

round of phone-screening interviews, he became one of six finalists.

Based on a report by ysnews.com, a Yellow Springs news outlet, their principal search resembled Shaker's with one vital difference — the district didn't hire a search firm. The six finalists began formal interviews Feb. 20. Kuehnle didn't make it past this round. The three candidates who did underwent background

checks. Final evaluations were scheduled for March 11, 12 and 13 — one candidate each day.

The superintendent explained to ysnews.com that each candidate would start the day at 8 a.m. with a presentation to school staff, who would fill out evaluations. Then, situational evaluations would be collected. For example, candidates would participate in a "mock parent meeting" with an "angry parent" and try to resolve the problem. In another situation, the candidate would complete a "mock teacher evaluation" while observing a real class. Following that, the candidate would have lunch with teachers and meet with a panel of students. In the evening, at a community meeting, candidates would answer questions posed by attendees.

The day after all of the evaluations were complete, the superintendent would meet with teachers and administrators to select a finalist.

On March 20, Yellow Springs announced its selection: Jack Hatert.

According to the Dayton Daily News, Hatert had been interim principal of Yellow Springs High School since March 2018. Before that, Hatert had been an assistant principal at Yellow Springs for three years, and before that, a teacher at Yellow Springs for 10 years.

Dawn Bennett, Yellow Springs district treasurer, wrote via email of the district's decision not to use a search firm. "School districts typically only use search



firms to hire the superintendent and treasurer. These are the only two positions that report directly to the school board,” she stated. “School board members usually have day jobs, so they need to use search firms in order to find qualified candidates.”

In a March 6 interview with The Shakerite, Shaker Board President Jeffrey Isaacs explained the philosophy behind using a search firm. “You want to have a process that has a lot of fidelity, so you’re going to a firm that does nothing but this. They set up the process, they know where they need to be careful, they know where they need to bring folks in. So, we do this rarely enough that we want to make sure we get it right. We don’t have anyone that does this every day. There’s that aspect — you want to get it right,” he said.

“The other thing is you want to tap into networks that bring in people outside of just your networks, and that’s part of what these search firms are bringing to the table,” he continued.

A review of profile photos of HYA associates on the firm’s site found that of the 119 associates, 64 are male and 55 are female. Fourteen are African-American, and two are hispanic. Of the six hires Shaker made through HYA prior to Kuehnle’s, three came from school districts in Virginia, one from New York and two from Northeast Ohio. Of the three from Virginia, two, Hutchings and Wilkins, came from the same school district.

“And then, finally, you’ve got to do all of the other things that

are involved — vet a large pool of people to make sure you don’t have folks that are inappropriate for the position that you’re looking for,” Isaacs said. “You’re doing things that you don’t normally do in the daily business of the district,” such as ensure ap-

“The only costs associated with our hiring process for our principal have been indirect costs such as Steffanie’s time in advertising, organizing and managing the process.”

Dawn Bennett  
*Yellow Springs Treasurer*

plicants’ qualifications align with the job requirements. “So you’ve got to hire some outside talent to bolster your ability to do some of these things.”

Isaacs said that as a board

member, he has invested significant time in the details of the recent superintendent search. “And that’s with the support of these outside firms,” he said. “So, I can appreciate it from firsthand experience — that there is a lot of value in being coached through it, and having an office that already has all the forms developed and processes worked out.”

That’s three reasons: fidelity, access to wider networks and experience. According to the district’s monthly financial reports posted at shaker.org, Shaker paid \$26,269 for the 2015 principal search that ended with Jones’ withdrawal. HYA redid the search in 2016 for expenses only, bringing the total to \$34,913.80.

At Yellow Springs, according to Bennett, “The only costs associated with our hiring process for our principal have been indirect costs such as Steffanie’s time in advertising, organizing and managing the process.” Steffanie Marchese is the Yellow Springs School District superintendent’s assistant.

“We try to use very little paper,” Bennett continued. “All application materials are sent electronically and only printed if the candidate will be considered. As our process was pretty intensive, we did have parts of the interview that ran in to the evenings, and meals were provided to those who were part of the screening process.”

Jonathan Kuehnle declined to be interviewed for this story.

*Campus and City Editor Ethan Bloch contributed reporting.*



**Junior Rhazariah McFall** is a member of choir and takes French. “Just as a starting step, effort would be monumental for change,” she said. **Photo by Mae Nagusky.**

# BEING BLACK IN SHAKER SCHOOLS

Mae Nagusky *Web Managing Editor*

Students say  
their experiences  
are marked by  
systemic inequity,  
isolation and  
microaggressions



**Senior Brianna Jarrell**, on the right, performs in Sankofa Feb. 23. She is a MAC Sister Scholars leader and a drama, task and multimedia leader for Sankofa. **Photo by David Vahey.**



**H**alfway through the Nov. 8 meeting, senior Brianna Jarrell stepped up onto the stage. She took the microphone from Substitute Principal David Glasner and expressed frustration about how she and her friends had been treated after school.

"I get that the whole, 'Students are a priority,' and everything, but I don't believe that they're listening to us, because they're too busy saying that we're up to something. Especially us minority students," Jarrell said, who explained that when she sat alone in the egress after school, no staff addressed her. But, she said, when she sat there with friends, security staff told them they had to "move on."

Jarrell also spoke about disparities in the experiences of white and black students at Shaker, especially when it comes to discipline. But, she continued, "It's not even just our school; it's our society." She said people presume that any group of minority students is doing something wrong.

Other black students followed Jarrell's lead.

Junior Olivia McDowell took the microphone and explained that she was the student whose complaints were used to put English teacher Jody Podl on administrative leave in October. The Shaker Heights Teachers' Association authored a letter criticizing the administration's actions and alleging that Podl was not given due process because she was reprimanded without having a chance to respond to allegations. The district later apologized for its treatment of Podl.

The letter also stated that Podl had spoken with

a student who had not completed an assignment and that the student "misconstrued some of the questions that Jody asked and was very upset."

"I'm Olivia McDowell. I'm a junior and I'm the student that they're referring to in that letter," McDowell told the audience.

She went on to criticize the inequity of enrollment in upper-level classes at the high school, and she questioned the district's efforts to address equity.

Equity denotes freedom from bias or favoritism, a state of fairness and impartiality. And while students don't believe they are being blatantly discriminated against because of their race, some believe that they are treated differently.

"I don't want to get emotional, but I care about

my education," McDowell said during the meeting. "Y'all sweep stuff under the rug and act like it just doesn't matter — act like it's not going on. I don't get it. What about the damage to a student when they're, what, one of three, one of five black kids in their class because of the whole education gap that y'all have?"

The Shakerite talked with these students and others and asked them to reflect on their experience in Shaker, including any experience with racial inequities.

Students interviewed said inequity stems from a lack of resources pro-

moted among or given to black students.

Jarrell said Shaker needs to inform students about resources such as study circles more often. "I just feel like the acknowledgement of certain resources aren't brought up enough, and I feel like that will help take the programs to another level," she said.



**Senior Corin Manning reads the morning announcements. She is president of Shaker's student NAACP and a member of the Student Leadership Team. Photo by David Vahey.**

The high school's study circles are after-school opportunities to get help from teachers in the four core subject areas: history, math, English and science. Study circles are offered for two hours after school once a week per subject.

Study circles were created in the early 2000s after Dr. John Ogbu, an anthropology professor at the University of California at Berkeley, studied reasons for the achievement gap at Shaker. In his resulting 2003 book "Black Amer-

ican Students in an Affluent Suburb," Ogbu concluded that black students believed they were academically inferior to white students and thus excluded themselves from higher-level courses. He also concluded that teachers contributed to those feelings of subordination.

ended them last year and delayed their start until Oct. 22 this year. Teachers should extend resources to students if they need help, Jarrell said. Teachers could help "by telling students when the study tables are, or when and where there's tutoring centers and reaching out to peers," she said.

"I feel like a lot of the students feel like the teachers don't care, and then they kind of just give

up," she said. McDowell also said that resources are not equitably available. "I feel like they'll give certain students the tools needed for them to strive and for them to do what they have to do to become successful," she said. McDowell didn't provide any specific examples of such tools, but said she has heard of "certain students getting more extra credit opportunities, or some students not being aware of what was

needed in order to move forward into the IB Diploma Programme until it's too late."

Science teacher Sharita Hill said she thinks there's more inequity across the levels of classes than within individual classrooms. "I do see the inequity in the higher-level courses as it goes down to the lower-level courses," she said.

Science teacher William Scanlon also noted inequity in the lev-



**Science teacher Sharita Hill** teaches four classes and is a co-adviser of SGORR. "No matter what level or race the students are, I try to treat them with the same level of respect," she said. **Photo by David Vahey.**



eling of courses.

"I don't think there's a lack of fairness that could be attributed to black and white, but sometimes over the years, I feel like [the district] gives more attention to the AP and IB students than they do to the lower-level students and middle students," Scanlon said.

Scanlon said the inequity can be attributed to how much money is being directed toward the IB program instead of to lower-level classes. He said smaller classes would benefit students. "When it's a big class, the kids don't get the individual attention they need, and the lower-level kids, especially, need that attention," he said.

Because most IB Diploma Programme students are white, the district's investment in that program can amplify the belief that white students are valued more than students of color.

Hill said her students have said that her expectations are much higher than other teachers'. "They say their white teachers let them do whatever they want because they don't care," she said.

"Students have told me that other teachers never give them homework assignments, reading assignments, or make them research projects. I think this has negatively impacted these students because these skills are important to learn and perfect no matter what academic level these students are at," she said.

Hill said it upsets her students have come to her and said their other teachers don't care what they do, because she knows every-

one is capable. "No matter what level or race the students are, I try to treat them with the same level of respect," she said.

Hill said many of the general-level biology students that she taught did not achieve at full potential because the curriculum is not as engaging or as rigorous as that of upper-level science courses.

**"It does in a way  
make me feel  
upset because  
for Shaker to  
be marketed as  
such a diverse  
school, the  
diversity within  
each classroom  
doesn't seem  
like it's where it  
should be."**

**Sharita Hill**  
*science teacher*

"And I don't know if they are being pushed enough or as much as we are pushing our upper-level students, and I think we can," she continued.

Students also said that teachers approach black and white students differently.

Senior Jeremiah Caver said that teachers have spoken to him in a more "simple-minded" way.

"They talk to you like you won't understand [the way] they talk to the rest of the class," he said. Caver said he sees information being taught to his white friends at a fast pace, but the teacher will explain the information to him slowly, as if he wouldn't be able to understand it otherwise.

Sophomore Zaria Thomas said sometimes teachers critique only black students about not doing their homework — when white students didn't do their homework, either.

Thomas said one way to make school more equitable would be to treat everyone equally.

Senior Kayla Young said she's had teachers who treat black and white students differently. "Just treat us all the same," she said. "We're all going to do the same work."

For example, Young said that one teacher pushes black students harder than white students and more strictly enforces rules for black students.

Junior Sariah Wright came to a similar conclusion — she thinks teachers have lower expectations for her because of her race. "It makes me feel like I'm less than what I am," she said. Wright said, for example, that teachers pass back tests and express disappointment in a white student's performance but not in hers.

Students elaborated on Mc-



**Junior Olivia McDowell** performs a choreographed dance for Sankofa Feb. 23. She is in Fashion Club, competes as a varsity cheerleader and is a dance leader for Sankofa. **Photo by David Vahey.**

Dowell's comment about minority enrollment in advanced classes.

Senior Corin Manning said she feels disrespected due to her race. She said some classmates' attitudes seem to communicate, "Why are you here?"

Junior Rhazariah McFall has grown used to being one of the only black students in her classes. "Usually the minority is in the less advanced classes, which is

weird," said McFall, who added that she is not sure why and is curious.

Scanlon said there aren't as many black students in his honors-level classes as in his mid-level and lower-level classes. "As far as numbers are concerned, as far as data of black and white kids are concerned, it's definitely unequal," he said.

A data analysis by Hanover Research during the 2015-16

school year found that 4.9 percent of black sophomores were enrolled in at least one AP or IB course, while 62.8 percent of white students were. Also, only 11.3 percent of black juniors were enrolled in at least one AP or one IB course, while 67.9 percent of white juniors were.

Students can feel uncomfortable when outnumbered in class.

"I'm not black, but it feels pretty awful because I know what it feels like to be the only person in the room that is your race because I'm biracial: half Asian, half white," sophomore Aine Jameson said.

Jarrell spoke of a similar experience. She said in some of her classes, she doesn't feel comfortable working with anyone. "I just won't speak and I'll just work by myself," she said.

Hill said that when forming groups during class, her black students will create groups together, and her white students will mostly do the same. "You'll see the big divisions within the classroom, and that's across all of the classes I teach," she said.

The lack of integration in classes is disturbing, Hill said. "It does in a way make me feel upset because for Shaker to be marketed as such a diverse school, the diversity within each classroom doesn't seem like it's where it should be," she said.



Junior Cecilia Zagara said racially unbalanced classes limit discussions.

“I know in my econ class we always have these really deep conversations, but the class is practically all white, so it’s just a bunch of white people talking about white people,” said Zagara. “We’re not hearing the other side, and the other side isn’t hearing what we have to say.”

McDowell said it’s hard when she’s one of just a few black stu-

**Sophomore Zaria Thomas** is a member of Cooking Club and a player on the women’s basketball team. “Sometimes teachers critique only the black students about not doing their homework, when a white student didn’t do their homework, either,” she said. **Photo by David Vahey.**



dents in a classroom. “Say a question comes up about race; all of a sudden you’re supposed to be the voice for the whole African-American community, and all people think different ways,” she said.

McDowell said that the isolated feeling has grown familiar. “I’m very used to it, because that’s how Shaker has been for a very long time,” she said.

“I guess it feels normal because usually my classes are like that,” Weatherspoon said.

Zagara said students practice self-segregation. “I feel like you’re always more comfortable around your friends, and if your friends are the same race as you, you’re going to be comfortable around them and act differently around them than new people that might be a different race,” she said.

Black students do segregate themselves within the classroom, said Caver, because, if there’s only two or three black kids, they think, “We gotta stick together.”

Manning said in her high school experience, she felt alone because of such segregation. “I felt completely isolated. It was just me and this other black boy, and we would just sit together and try to help each other with the work. Nobody else wanted to help us. I was kind of scared to ask for help,” she said.

Senior Nasir Rashid said he is one of two black males in his grade who takes IB classes. “It makes me feel bad because I want to have other people that look like me in these classes,” he said.

Another cause of inequity students noted was microaggressions from teachers or other students.

“Microaggressions are subtle words or actions that have this unintentional but slightly aggressive meaning to them that typically makes the person that it’s being directed toward feel uncomfortable or abnormal,” junior Tiffany Hsich, who is a SGORR leader, said.

Rashid said a lot of people can say something racist by accident. He said it’s something that’s “unfortunately a part of the real world.” He offered an example that occurred outside of school. He said at his job one time, a person asked him if he rolled his blunts like he was wrapping his burrito. Rashid told the customer that he has never smoked marijuana.

Jameson said she notices when white teachers use slang or change their tone of voice to sound less formal. She said she thinks teachers do this to try relate to black students. “At first you kind of don’t pick it out as wrong, because you don’t really notice it, but I realized that there’s a definite difference between being white and being black besides just your skin color. It’s definitely in the way you’re treated,” she said.

“I feel sometimes that it’s very intentional. They know what

they're doing."

Young said she noticed that white students who ask a black student to do something will sometimes ask differently than if they were asking another white student. "They will try to come off way nicer than they really are, because they think we're going to get aggressive or something like

**"We are looking  
at students as  
groups of  
populations,  
and we have to  
stop doing that."**

**Sharita Hill**  
*science teacher*

that," she said.

Microaggressions can lurk in compliments, Caver said. When people offer praise by saying, "You're so articulate," the statement implies that the person who made that comment doesn't expect him to be.

Such slights are hard to understand if people don't experience them every day, Caver said. "[White students] won't explicitly treat you different, but it will be more subtle," he said. "Some people just don't see it. Either they don't know what they're looking

for, or they have no idea that the problem exists."

Scanlon said he noticed that some students are unintentionally treated differently because of their race. "Sometimes, I don't even think the administrator or teacher knows that they're doing it," he said. "It's not a conscious thing, it's a society thing."

Caver continued, "It's because of how systematic everything is — that it is that way — and that people don't broaden who they talk to and who they hang out with outside of the classroom."

McDowell agreed that achieving equity is a systemic struggle. "It's not a surface issue. It's built in, and it's going to take time for everyone to move forward and advance their thought on equity, on equality, and how to treat each other," she said.

Rather than understanding what each student needs, Hill said, biases dictate how we talk and act. "We are looking at students as groups of populations, and we have to stop doing that," she said.

Hill said we need to acknowledge that we have biases and that every student learns best in different ways. "Everyone is going to be different in that respect," she said. "Each of these students are independently learning best in different ways. Then we can start to approach them in different ways."

"I think we need to identify that there is a problem first. I think that's the one thing that's hard to admit, even through our personal biases," Hill said. "I think a lot of

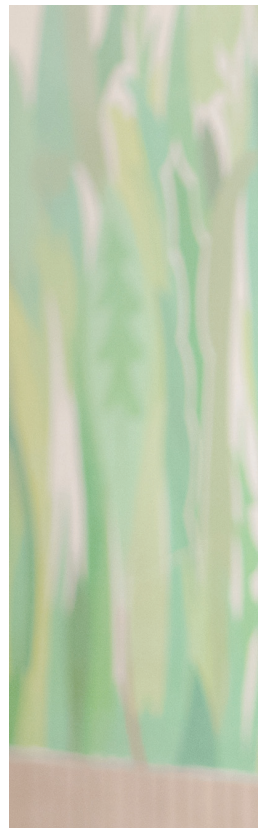
it is unintentional."

The district is taking steps to bridge these achievement and equity gaps. One example is the Bridges Program, a three-week summer program for minority and disadvantaged students to develop study skills and introduce the content for Honors, AP and IB Diploma-level courses. Students and faculty meet monthly during the school year. It is directed by social studies teacher Sarah Davis and co-advised by social studies teachers Joseph Konopinski and Brian Berger.

Shaker also created the Equity Task Force three years ago. Its mission is "exploring the assets and challenges of embracing and moving toward equity for all students," according to shaker.org. The district also lists 19 groups that assisted the task force and collaborate to increase equity. Examples include Neighbor Nights, SGORR and Fathers Committee.

Teachers and students agreed there isn't a clear-cut solution. If there was, the problem would no longer exist.

McFall said the first step is effort. "First, address the problem face on," she said. "Some people will say there's not a problem, but





**Senior Nasir Rashid** is a captain of the football team and is a member of CORE. “I knew IB was going to be hard, but one of the reasons I entered it was to show the way it could be diverse,” he said. **Photo by David Vahey.**



there obviously is.”

“We always talk about how diverse Shaker is, but there are problems that we don’t talk about, like the inequity between races,” McFall said. “If they just gave an effort — that would be so much better than talking, and then on to the next thing. Just as a starting step, effort would be monumental for change.”

Caver said he knows what will help. “It would simply be to encourage the students to broaden

their horizon, and if they’re in a class that they’re getting easy A’s, then try to get them to take the next step and let them know that this can help them in the future.”

Students offered ideas to bridge the achievement and equity gaps.

Weatherspoon said Shaker should take more of a restorative practice approach by convening an assembly about race and equity and holding discussions during classes afterward.

Thomas said the school should

make announcements to encourage people extend their social interactions. They should say, “Make a new friend of a different color. Venture outside your comfort zone,” she said.

Thomas also said she thinks teachers should intentionally pick groups to mix up the races.

Scanlon finds that sometimes he reorganizes student groups for that reason. “I feel like they sometimes do isolate themselves,” he said.

Hill said, “I design lab groups where I try to make the populations as diverse as I can.”

Young doesn’t think there is a solution to making classes more diverse “unless they handpicked the classes, and that’s going to take too much time.”

Everyone should want to push themselves, said Rashid, even though it might be hard. “I knew IB was going to be hard, but one of the reasons I entered it was to show the way it could be diverse,” he said.

Scanlon said he wish he knew the answer because inequity has been a problem for all 23 years he’s worked at Shaker. He said, “I think that the school should never stop doing things and trying to find the best plan to help it be more equitable.”

*The Shakerite’s continuing coverage of equity concerns will examine the role academic tracking in elementary school plays in high school class enrollment.*



# IN THE WAKE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

Ashley Sah Investigations Reporter

Hilary Shakelton Investigations Reporter

*Following the district's investigation of a teacher for "bullying and harassment," faculty report feeling uneasy, but students surveyed say they have not noticed a change*

**B**ecause of the district's investigation of English teacher Jody Podl, teachers feel there is more tension in the classroom and find themselves filtering their actions and comments.

However, responses to a Shakerite survey suggest students are not aware of teachers' feelings and have not noticed changes in their relationships.

Podl was placed on administrative leave Oct. 10

while the administration conducted an investigation into claims of bullying, harassment and intimidation and separate discrimination claims. Students, parents and teachers were informed of the decision via email from former Principal Jonathan Kuehnle Oct. 19. The district found no evidence of discrimination, but Dr. Terri Breeden, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, declared that the other claims were valid and disciplined Podl. The Shaker Heights Teachers' Association protest-





**Science teacher John O'Verko said each year he interacts with his students differently based on their personalities. Photo by Astrid Braun.**

On Nov. 14, Morris read a prepared statement during the public comment period of a Board of Education meeting.

"I've heard discussions over the last 48 hours that have compelled me to speak. And those discussions have been about a perceived 'us versus them' mentality [teachers versus students] portrayed about the [SHTA]," he said.

In a Feb. 11 email message to students, staff and parents, Interim Superintendent Stephen Wilkins announced that the district withdrew disciplinary action against Podl. The arbitrator's decision is expected sometime this month.

To explore the impact of these events, The Shakerite created an anonymous Google survey asking students how they view their relationships with teachers. It was sent via email to all English teachers, who were encouraged to administer it to their students. The survey was available from Feb. 25 to March 4.

The Shakerite received 93 responses to the survey: 12 respondents were freshmen (12.9 percent), 62 were sophomores (66.7 percent), two were juniors (2.2 percent) and 17 were seniors (18.3 percent).

Survey responses suggest students noticed a correlation between the strength of student-teacher relationships and their grade level. The more time

students spent in the high school, the stronger their relationships with teachers grew.

"I think my teachers this year are more open to discussing grades and personal life and what not, whereas freshman year it felt like there was a more strict approach to casual conversation in some cases but two or three teachers who respected chatting," one survey respondent wrote. "This year I feel more comfortable talking to every one of my teachers."

Senior Kaela Ruffin echoed those feelings in an interview. "I think most of the things teachers tell me, they try to get me to grow as a person, and now the teachers I had freshman year, the things they said freshman year, make sense now that I am a senior," she said. "So it's like they are here to help."

At the same Nov. 14 board meeting, English teacher Aimee Grey questioned the impact of the decision to place Podl on leave based on a student's complaint. Grey said,

"If teachers are uncertain about exactly what kinds of situations merit removal, we begin to ask questions about when we might be put on administrative leave: If I give a grade a student doesn't like? If a student disagrees with me? If a parent or student is frustrated with me?"

Grey continued, "If teachers feel unsupported and uncertain, that will impact their effectiveness, because they will be forced to second-guess every decision."

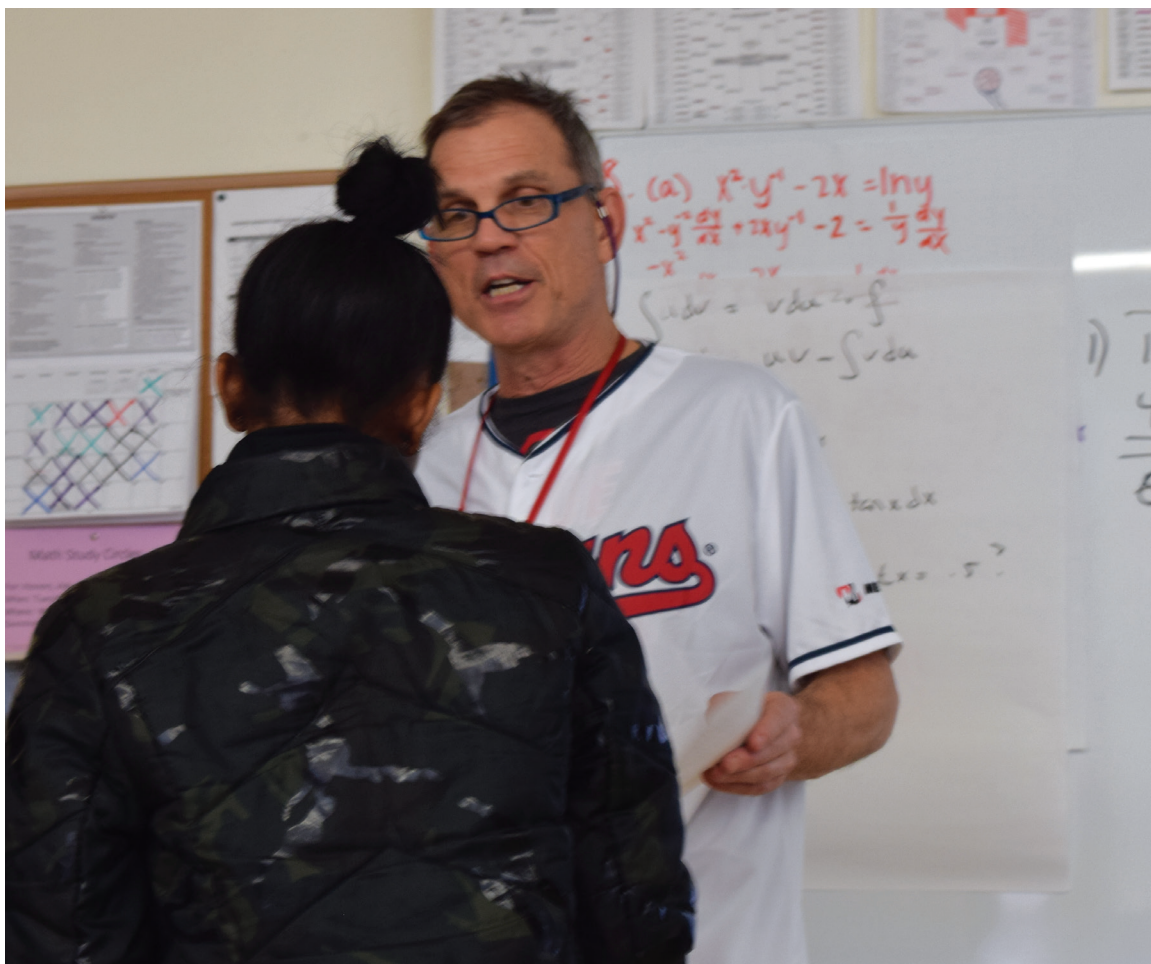
According to Ohio Revised Code 124.388, administrative

ed that Breeden acted without allowing Podl to see the complaints Breeden cited or respond to the claims.

The SHTA then filed a grievance with the district Nov. 8 on the basis of academic freedom, communication and the lack of due process for Podl.

On Nov. 30, after failing to resolve the grievance, the district entered arbitration with the SHTA. Under arbitration, a third party is brought in to settle a dispute.

According to Dr. John Morris, SHTA president, this is the first time in the 35-year history of the association that it entered arbitration with the district.



**Math teacher Ray Durban** said he has been more cautious about how he addresses students following the district's investigation of Podl. "I don't mean to insult or put students down, but I speak the truth," he said. **Photo by Astrid Braun.**

leave is "to be used only in circumstances where the health or safety of an employee or of any person or property entrusted to the employee's care could be adversely affected." This means a school employee can be ordered to stay home if school leaders believe that their presence in the school could negatively affect their own health or the safety or health of others.

Sophomore Colin McCabe said that during the time Podl was on leave, one of his teachers expressed fear of being reprimanded for giving students a bad grade.

In an interview, Morris echoed Grey's concern about how teachers could be affected. He said

teachers feel they cannot be as challenging or open with criticism as they once were because they are worried about how students and the administration might perceive their grading and teaching policies. He thought students could sense discomfort in their teachers, leading to a sort of invisible barrier.

He also expressed concern that the administration's actions against Podl might discourage students from speaking up.

"I think the unintended consequence is that students feel like if they report, if they speak their truth, even though it may be difficult, they may actually jeopardize a student and teacher relation-

ship that they value," Morris said.

One student surveyed did note a change in student teacher relationships. "Some things are a bit more tense — because the teachers aren't allowed to tell us what's going on, even if they have information," they wrote. "It's keeping us all in the dark."

Ruffin said she thinks teachers are now more cautious about how they speak in the classroom and how they conduct themselves.

Math teacher Ray Durban said that, after Podl was placed on leave, "even I, who pride myself on good relationships with students, paused for thought, concern, measured my words a little bit."



Sophomore Erica Smith said that although teachers have addressed the instances of administrative leave in class, she thinks “there hasn’t been a change in relationships with students.”

Ruffin echoed Smith’s observation. “I feel like there’s no tension. Everything is pretty much the same with all teachers,” she said.

“My relationships with teachers haven’t changed,” another survey responder said. “Although it has been talked about numerous times in my various classes, it doesn’t change my view on my teachers.”

Still, teachers perceive stress on student-teacher relationships since the district took action against Podl.

“In some respects, I take that instance as a good reminder. I happen to be a fairly unfiltered teacher at times,” Durban said. “I don’t mean to insult or put students down, but I speak the truth. Sometimes children think there’s certain places and times for the truth, and I respect that.”

Morris said that students may notice a change in their relationships with teachers because “everyone is in kind of a holding pattern until we implement restorative practices. We’re going to do a district-wide school training at the beginning of next school year, so I think after that I would expect students to see restorative circles and restorative practices used for discipline issues.”

Morris said, “The reasons why most students have not seen change is because everyone is in a sort of holding place.”

## ***TYPES OF STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS***

According to The Australian Society for Evidence Based Teaching, there are three keys to successful relationships: warmth, empathy and time.

The organization identified four main types of relationships teachers and students can hold: authoritarian, aloof, friendly or high performance. They are measured based on the amount of “pressure” compounded with the amount of “care.”

“Each year, each group is different, and how I interact with each group is based on the personalities I have each year,” science teacher John O’Verko said.

Warmth refers to accepting students for who they are. Empathy means understanding students’ thinking processes. Time is the time taken by teachers to be both “physically and mentally present when talking with students.”

Pressure is demanding that students “behave well, work hard, and understand material.” Care involves helping students excel and being honest with them.

Authoritarian relationships include a high amount of pressure and low amount of care. They can foster an “us versus them” feeling.

Friendly relationships include a low amount of pressure and high amount of care: the op-

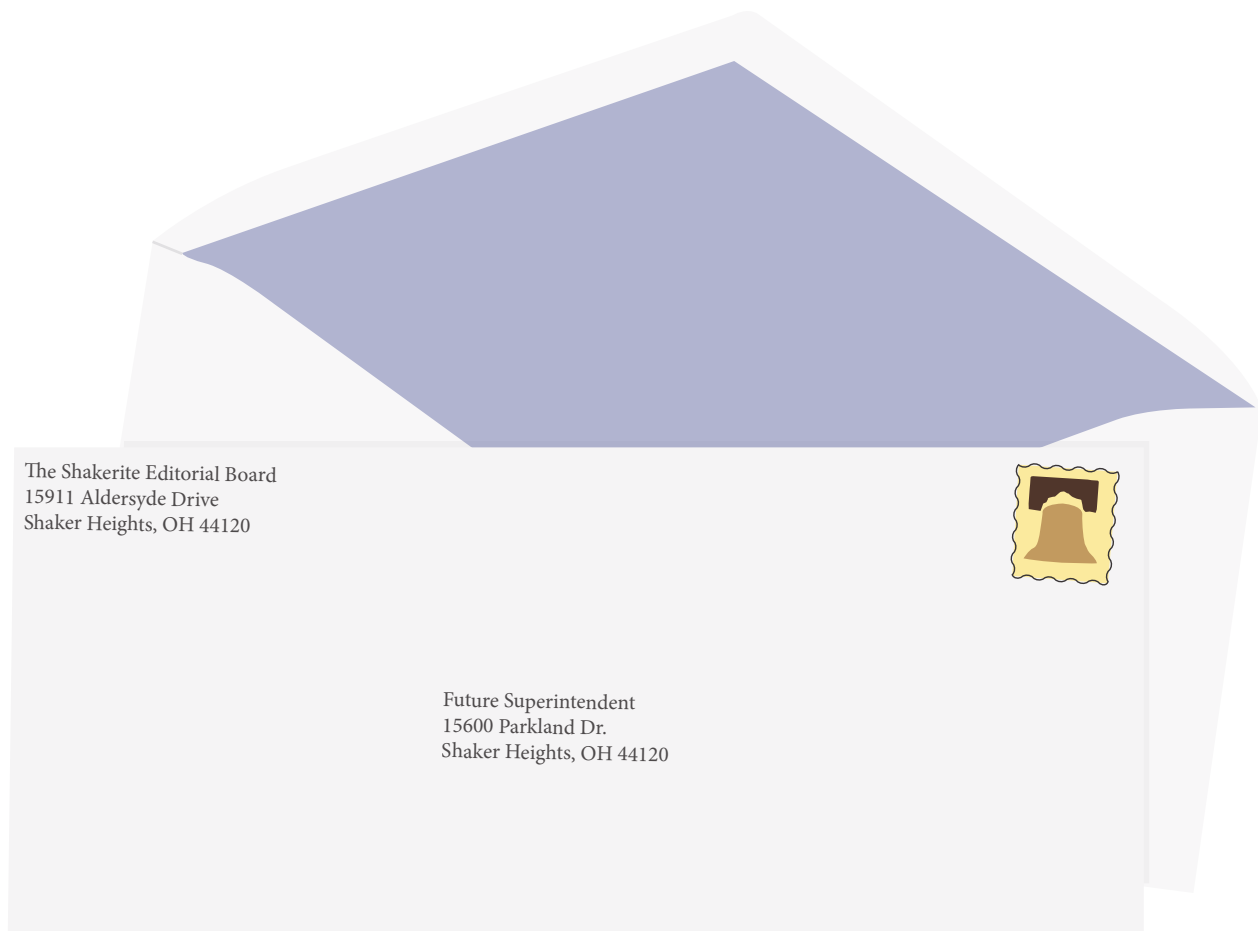
posite of authoritarian relationships. Such teachers accept minimal effort and mediocre work. “Friendly” teachers can have chaotic classrooms and foster independent relationships with students.

Aloof relationships are the worst of both worlds; they include low amounts of both pressure and care. Aloof teachers go through the motions and exhibit an indifference toward their students.

High performance relationships are considered the best relationships, representing both care for students and pressure on them to succeed. Such teachers want to help their students learn, which leads to their high standards of effort and behavior. They also show empathy for students, as they respect them as individuals.

“I would say most of my relationships are high performance,” sophomore Erica Smith said. “A lot of my teachers try to make the classroom fun but also are able to make us focus when we need to.”

Sophomore Athena Vadnal said, “Definitely most [relationships] are friendly and high performance. All of my teachers work well with giving the students their own flexibility and time to themselves, with also being able to conduct a classroom and create a learning environment.”





Dear Dr. Glasner,

Welcome to your new position in the Shaker Heights City School District. By now, you know we're an unusually diverse community that strives to embrace the differences that make us unique. We often succeed in achieving that goal, but like all school districts, we have our flaws.

You probably won't find a community as critical of these flaws as we are. At first, this acknowledgement of our faults can seem harsh and unforgiving. However, our self-criticism isn't intended to tear down the district. Rather, it stems from a collective desire to bring this community as close to perfection as possible. As Shaker students, we not only want our schools to do better for us, but also for every student who will follow us, and our community feels the same. Shaker's progress is forged in the crucible of criticism.

We don't doubt that we create a challenging environment in which to lead. However, while we do have an extraordinary capacity for fault-finding, we celebrate our successes with similar passion.

A body only grows stronger by breaking itself down and rebuilding. There's no doubt that Shaker has broken down, this year more than most. If you look closely at these pieces, however, you will see the potential we have to rebuild.

When Fernway Elementary School burned, the community mourned together. But from that destruction emerged an opportunity for improvement. The Fernway narrative quickly turned away from sorrow and toward fortitude, dedication and investment in the school's future. Fernway is well on its way to a new and improved facility, and we hope the rest of Shaker can follow in its path.

In addition to a new elementary school, Shaker sorely needs a restored relationship between its teachers and administration. The two groups, which had been drifting apart since 2015, are now fully estranged. In order for the administration to make the best choices for students, you'll need to start and maintain an open and honest dialogue with teachers — the adults in this building who know us, the students, the best.

A new superintendent, having worked in the district or not, enjoys the advantage of a clean slate — and with it comes a new opportunity to forge a solid, lasting and trusting bond with our teachers. Teachers need to know where they stand with your administration. Will their opinions be honored

when it comes time to choose a principal? Will they have a say in curriculum changes of a similar magnitude to the elimination of the Woodbury science labs? What can teachers say to students about their performance and behavior, and what can't they? How will the administration react to teacher-student conflicts in the future?

These bonds might be forged best by shared experience. Encourage teachers to become administrators, and support them in that process. Administrators who have walked in teachers' shoes know how to accommodate staff frustrations and create better policies because of them. Mostly, however, administrators who have experience in the classroom know how to steer the schools in the best direction for the students.

Continuity counts, too. In the past five years, teachers and students have seen too many new faces, and it would be comforting to see familiar ones.

We know, though, that our needs aren't the only ones you will attend to. A large part of your job is balancing the needs of everyone around you. You are the middleman between the budget's restraints and the needs of this community. Allow push and pull between the two, because it's necessary for our well-being. But don't choose sides.

No one loves the middleman, but if he does his job right, he is respected. And the best reward you can earn in your position is the respect of this community. We can tell that you care about these schools, and for that, we respect you.

In 2015, after a Lomond kindergartener asked to go to his locker and instead left the school and was picked up by a police officer, the district put his teacher, Cathleen Grieshop, on administrative leave. The community packed the next Board of Education meeting after hearing that the administration intended to fire the teacher. Grieshop had notified the office of the boy's failure to return after a few minutes, and many saw the district's actions as unfair. As he reflected on the low teacher morale that ensued, former Superintendent Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr. offered advice for Shaker's next superintendent. "They're going to have to be a leader that really doesn't take things personal," he said. "Sometimes there's a little drama. You have to rise above it. You can't get into it."

But we don't want you to rise above the drama. We want you to take everything that happens in this school district personally. While we don't seem



like a small town, we resemble one. For better or for worse, this community is close-knit. Everything that happens here should matter to you — any communication mistake, student-teacher problem or scheduling error. These things should all be personal to you because they're personal to us. We want you to care enough about the well-being of this district to take responsibility for every broken piece, even if it doesn't directly involve you.

It's your job to lead us, and we trust you to do that. You have our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

The Shakerite Editorial Board

# What Are the Real Costs of IB?

*The district's investment in IB contradicts its commitment to equity*



*By Ainsley Snyder, Opinion Editor*

*Illustration by Alona Miller*

**Some Shaker students** face a tough decision sophomore year. Do they choose the rigorous, highly promoted International Baccalaureate program? Do they choose the other rigorous, but more well-known Advanced Placement classes? Or do they stick with challenging honors and core classes?

Shaker prides itself on being one of 10 high

schools in Northeast Ohio to offer the IB Diploma Programme to juniors and seniors. The district promotes the program, and schools that offer the IB DP earn praise. Sites such as U.S. News rank high schools by, among other things, DP participation, test completion and scores and the percentage of IB students who earn the IB diploma. While



the percentage of students taking IB courses has fluctuated since the district adopted the program in 2010, the overall trend is that student participation has increased, both in DP students and total students taking IB classes, as students can pursue the unofficial IB Medallion Programme. Every day, students, IB or not, see the blue IB flag flying at the front of district schools and IB learner profile posters hanging in every classroom.

College entrance test preparation companies such as PrepScholar maintain that not much difference exists in the long run between IB and AP, especially in the college admissions process. Colleges recognize both IB and AP as the most rigorous courses available, and they usually do not favor one, unless a student is applying to a school in another country.

In that case, IB provides an advantage. Both programs can secure college credits if students earn high enough scores on their tests, and some state universities offer

tuition benefits to students who earn the IB Diploma. Both have a weighted grade point average of 5.0, and both induce lots of stress-filled late nights.

The most significant difference between the programs exists in assessments. Most AP exams include multiple choice and extended response questions. IB exams employ extended response questions. IB students also complete IB-defined assessments for each class. The Individual Assessment is a 20-hour project that culminates in a research paper that accounts for some portion of the final class grade. Depending on the course, AP and IB require different texts. In the case of English classes in which both AP and IB students are enrolled, IB requirements for literature prevail; AP does not require particular literature texts.

These differences, however, do not alter the essence of academic disciplines.

Not only do these classes create their fair share of stress, but they also create a financial burden. AP and IB exams are expensive. AP exams cost

about \$94 each, and some courses, such as AP Economics, require two tests and two payments. IB exams are \$119 each, and IB DP students must also pay a \$172 annual fee, according to the program's official website. These IB fees, which accumulate over a student's junior and senior year, can cost the DP student \$720, according to Shaker's website. But DP students taking six exams and paying the two annual fees would pay \$1,058.

With its IB logo and prominent declaration of K-12 IB status, the district homepage illustrates the marketing benefit Shaker gains from IB affiliation. But students outside the DP do not feel that they receive a benefit, and no one seems to be talking about it.

A district committed to this inflexible and

demanding program is a district that must see DP enrollees as golden students. While I would never criticize DP students for participating in the program, I do question

## **Why doesn't the district focus on Shaker's core issues, such as the achievement gap?**

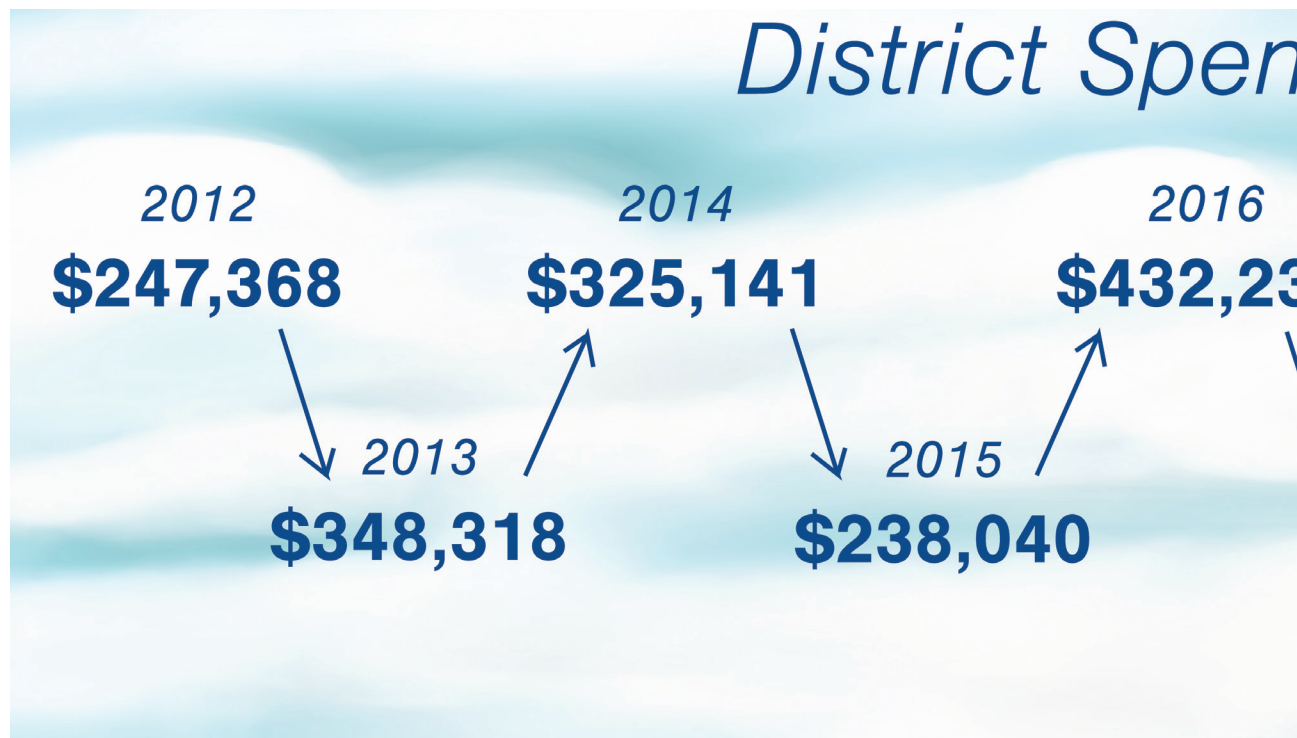
the district's IB-heavy allocation of resources and opportunities.

One example of IB DP privilege is evident in class scheduling. Because the IB requires DP students to complete particular courses in order to earn the IB diploma, DP students' schedules are completed first, by hand, to ensure the master schedule allows them to enroll in every class they have requested.

This approach hurts other students because it limits periods during which some courses are offered. As AP/honors students, a classmate and I wanted to take a French class, but we both ran into scheduling conflicts because the French class we needed was scheduled with DP students in mind, meaning neither of us could complete our credit in school. This meant we had to hire a tutor, take it at John Carroll University or Cuyahoga Community College this year or wait until next year to take the class.

Since adopting the DP, the administration has insisted on combining some AP and IB classes

# District Spending



rather than creating IB-only sections. The DP offers High Level and Standard Level tracks. Thus, teachers assigned to these classes teach at least three unique curricula and prepare students in the same classroom for three unique standardized tests. At best, IB and AP students receive half the attention that students in classes dedicated to either IB or AP receive. Offering separate IB and AP courses is the practice in most schools.

If students could enroll in smaller classes dedicated to either IB or AP, they could perform better nationally. Instead, although AP students outnumber IB students in AP/IB classes, teachers are compelled to focus on IB students in order to complete and submit their required IB assignments to the IB.

In 2013, the administration combined AP Literature and

IB Literature, and AP students' exam scores were generally lower than those of previous years. Only three students earned scores of five — on a scoring scale of one to five — on the 2013 AP Literature exam, while 17 students earned a five in 2012. On the other hand, Shaker DP students averaged a score of 5.13 on the IB English exam, which was higher than the worldwide average of 4.77.

This drop in AP Literature exam scores coincided with an exam question that required students to write an essay about a novel of their choice. Students in that AP/IB Literature class read two novels during the first semester, and during second semester, they read plays and other genres to prepare for the IB exam, according to a November 2013 Shakerite story, "Tests Raise Doubts Over AP/IB Mesh,"

by former Campus and City Editor Abby White.

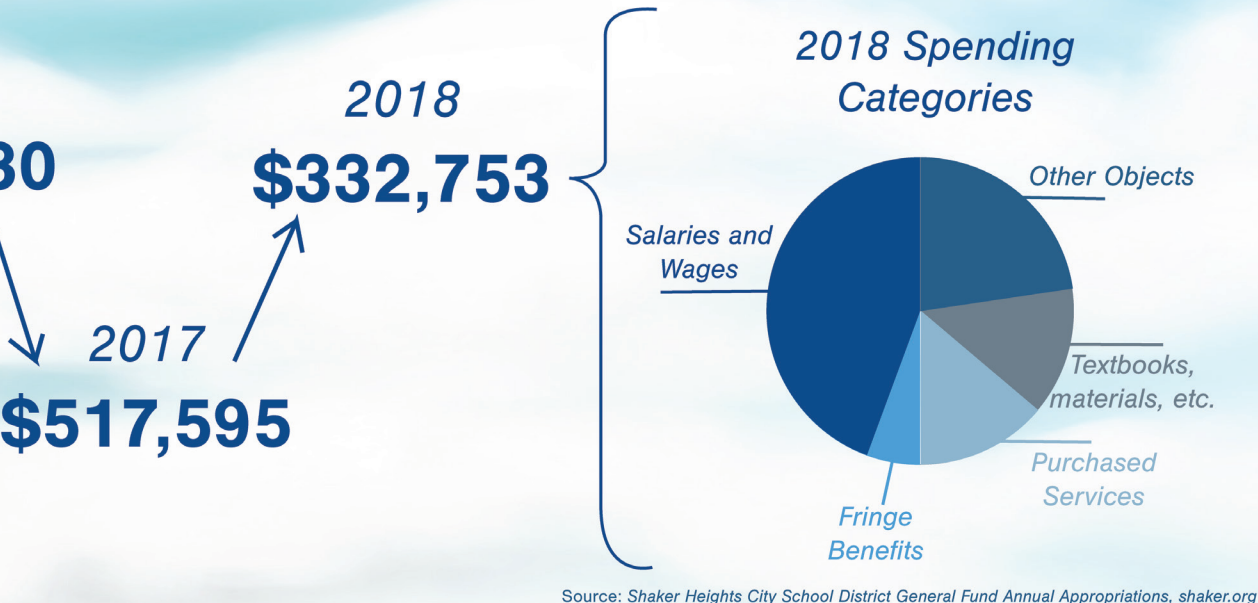
Is 5 percent of the student body really more important than the rest because they opted for the IB diploma? Shouldn't the education of the majority of the student body be in the greatest interest of the administration?

Shaker, like its DP students, also spends a lot of money on the IB Programme. The Shakerite requested and received documents about district IB spending from 2010 to now. According to those documents, in the 2018 fiscal year, from Oct. 1, 2017 to Sept. 30, 2018, the district spent \$332,753 on IB.

This is an outrageous amount of spending, especially because the district is cutting teachers over lack of sufficient funding. In a December 2018 story, Shakerite Investigations Reporter Ashley Sah documented the school



# Spending on IB



board's decision to eliminate 10.8 full-time teachers by the 2018-19 school year and eliminate 19 additional positions by the 2019-20 school year: six elementary teachers, four middle school teachers, three high school teachers and one support teacher. Three administrative and two clerical positions will also be cut in this school year.

When the district seizes upon declining enrollment, documented in a May 2018 story by Print Managing Editor Emet Celeste-Cohen, to cut teachers, class sizes increase — and individual attention, which is proven to benefit learning, decreases. Spending \$332,753 or similar amounts annually while also cutting staff and increasing class sizes suggests that the district is more concerned about including the IB brand in its PR materials than about every student learn-

ing.

If the district would maintain faculty staffing, class sizes could shrink on all levels, meaning students in core and honors classes could gain more one-on-one interaction with their teachers, which could encourage more students to take higher-level courses.

Shaker wants to narrow the achievement gap that students feel day to day, but spending money to maintain teachers' IB training and to employ IB coordinators to manage the program's many demands means that students in AP, honors or core courses are crowded into bigger classes, where they get less attention from their teachers. Why doesn't the district focus on Shaker's core issues, such as the achievement gap?

In a Dec. 3, 2018 panel discussion hosted by the Student Group On Race Relations, Cleve-

land State University Associate Professor Anne Galletta said that funding is an issue in closing the achievement gap. If a school had enough funding, it could decrease the gap. So why is the district spending so much money for primary and middle school students to get an IB education, when the majority of students will not be participating in the DP in the high school? Why isn't that money used to help the other hundreds of students and their educations? And why is the school using the DP to improve the experience of upper-tier students and expanding the achievement gap when we already have AP — a cheaper yet equally esteemed program — in place?

Instead of being known for IB, Shaker could be known as the school that offers equal opportunities for all of its students.

# Invest in Restoration, or Abandon It

*Restorative practices have the potential to improve the Shaker community*



**R**estorative practices. Over the past few years, it's a phrase we've been hearing a lot around Shaker. It began with my class at the middle school in 2015. Since then, it has been the subject of persistent conversation throughout the district. But in the four years since restorative practices appeared in my life, the effect has been limited.

My first experience with Shaker's version of restorative practices occurred in my eighth grade history class. One student caused a conflict with a classmate, and a few weeks later, we held a harm circle to discuss what had happened. By the time we got around to convening the circle, the class was had almost forgotten the incident, and the restorative practices were ineffective. While the same problem between those two students never occurred again, there was no real healing and no real closure for the victim. But I believe restorative practices can be much more effective when imple-

mented correctly.

The purpose of restorative practices is to repair, rather than punish. From altercations between students to excessive tardies, these behaviors would launch efforts to discover the root of the problems, rather than just disciplining students.

Restorative practices are meant to strengthen relationships between individuals and within communities. A correct implementation of restorative practices would benefit students. If students and teachers could better understand and trust one another, the school environment would be both healthier and happier.

After speaking to Gabriella Celeste, a Shaker resident and expert on restorative practices, I learned how restorative practices could begin to solve inequity problems at Shaker. She said that while restorative practices are a good first step, "My sense is that in order to tackle equity, like in the disproportionate use of out of school suspensions, schools have to adopt an explicit racial equity approach."



Lauren Sheperd,  
Education Columnist





ALONA MILLER

“Restorative practices come down to building authentic relationships. It’s not about a single approach, but a whole culture shift in how we engage with each other. And right now our district is in need of serious trust-building between students, staff and the community. Restorative practices could help us get there, but it has to be done right,” she continued.

This is why restorative practices are so important.

A March 1 letter written to the administration and signed by 12 parents requested that the district begin implementing restorative practices at the high school. The parents asked that the school invest the resources necessary to effectively begin using restorative practices and that it make a clear plan, using lessons learned at the middle school to help make decisions.

One person at the center of this push for restorative practices is our next superintendent, Dr. David Glasner. He was principal at the middle school when I was there and he led the implementation of restorative practices at that time. In an interview, he told me that there is both quantifi-

able and anecdotal evidence proving that restorative practices have been successful in the middle school. He’s talking about suspension rates, which have decreased. But there is still uncertainty about whether behavior is changing for the better.

In the March 18 Shaker Heights Teachers’ Association newsletter, eighth grade history teacher Michael Sears wrote, “In recent weeks, there have been an alarming number of student fights where staff members are seriously injured.” Sears also wrote the principal of the middle school, Miata Hunter, had to call an assembly to remind students of behavioral expectations. In the same newsletter, seventh grade English teacher John Koppitch cited instances in which teachers have been injured while attempting to break up fights.

So, it is important that these practices begin falling into place correctly. After talking to Lisa Vahey, an advocate for restorative practices in Shaker, I learned that low-level training has occurred in Shaker, but not enough to make a real impact.

Shaker has two choices: Invest heavily in restorative practices, or abandon them. Simply not suspending students and calling the statistical results

# Restorative Practices

**Building Community**  
Goal: *Create trust and relationships*



**Restorative Process**  
Goal: *Address root cause of the problem and address it; Includes harm circles and non-punative conflict resolution*



**Re-entry**  
Goal: *Welcome students back into the school community Includes 1:1 support*



***A better community and school environment***



proof that restorative practices are a success won't work. If the district wants results — and credit for their use of restorative practices — they must put in the time and money to ensure it works properly.

I'd argue that the solution at the middle school is not to revert to previous ways of punishment, but to provide more training and resources to teachers, to make that investment.

Middle school science teacher Christopher Oryl told me that fostering a community in the classroom is difficult to do in a short period of time without a consistent framework. He's in favor of restorative practices and he thinks community circles are helpful, but he wishes they didn't cut into his class time. This is a complaint echoed by teachers across the district: Restorative practices are good, but restorative practices without funding and effort can create an unsafe and unproductive learning environment.

Restorative practices will help sustain the community we've worked so hard to build only if we implement them the right way. A good example of this is the work done in California's Oakland Unified School District, which has become a model for instituting and supporting the approach.

In OUSD, there is a three-tier plan for restorative practices. It begins with building community, which includes classroom circles and aims to create trust and relationships. This is followed

Shaker has two  
choices:  
Invest heavily in  
restorative  
practices, or  
abandon them.

by restorative processes, which include harm circles and other non-punitive conflict resolution strategies. The goal of the second stage is to find the root cause of the problem and address it. Finally, OUSD utilizes an individualized re-entry program which helps to welcome students after they have been removed from the school environment for disciplinary reasons.

In addition, according to a Feb. 12 Edusource story, OUSD employs five restorative justice coordinators and about 24 facilitators, who work in district schools and "are responsible for all restorative justice efforts at the school sites." The five coordinators "manage the facilitators and train teachers and students in restorative justice techniques."

OUSD serves approximately 49,000 students and spends about \$2.5 million on restorative practice annually. (Protests have followed a proposed cut of \$850,000 in the OUSD restorative justice budget, however.) Shaker is a district of 5,000 students. By rough estimate, the cost for a similar program would amount to about \$260,000 a year.

A well-conceived and staffed approach such as OUSD's has the potential to change the game at Shaker, so long as adequate resources are devoted to it.

Restorative practices aren't only about changing the way we implement discipline, but the growth of our students as human beings. Our community is worth this investment.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENT JEFFREY ISAACS



**Isaacs speaks at a March 7 board meeting, just before the board announced Interim Principal David Glasner as one of two candidates for the Shaker superintendency. Photo by David Vahey.**

### Discussing the events of the past year and the role a new leader will play in Shaker's future

Astrid Braun Editor-in-Chief

*Editor's Note: This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity. The full interview can be found at [shakerite.com](http://shakerite.com).*

**So, I'm just going to jump right into it.**

Let's do it.

**Our plan for this issue is to have it center on all of the issues that were brought up at the community meeting in November.**

**So, first of all, I'm just going to ask: What were your thoughts, initially, about the community meeting?**

Well, I think I was taken aback, as everyone was, trying to understand what we'd just seen. It was clear that there was a need for greater listening and the core issues — the underlying issues, whatever they were.

The general sense was that folks were not, kind



of, connecting, hearing each other.

**And what did you come up with — how to respond?**

We felt that we needed to go point by point and understand what the short-term and long-term responses were to each of those things. Some of them, we put into a letter that we signed, you know, a couple of days after the meeting. Some of them are longer-term things — we're dealing with searching for new leadership in our district. And, as you know, we're on the verge of hiring a new superintendent, and we're searching for a principal for this building. I think that we felt that a lot of the issues we're seeing could really be addressed by getting folks in who are going to take things in a positive direction. That was the long-term solution, for us.

**What did you decide you were looking for in a leader?**

Our immediate responsibility is to choose the superintendent — all other attributes aside, you know, someone who is an excellent instructional leader, someone who's capable of managing a team, who understands budgets and finance. We really focused in on the need for someone who also could invest in relationships, could build a team that could work forward and would, sort of, listen across not only area boundaries, but also building boundaries. We're, in some ways, a small town, and we need to keep that in mind — that what happens in any corner affects every other corner. So, someone with that sensitivity. We wanted a caring leader, someone who would be intentional and thoughtful about what they were doing. I mean, all of those things kind of add up to having a real good dose of emotional intelligence.

**What sort of questions do you ask to find someone with emotional intelligence?**

When you push someone further on something, are they responding to it? Are they picking up the tone of the question? Are they understanding the dynamics of the room?

**How has Dr. Hutchings' tenure informed or shaped the criteria for the next superintendent?**

One bit of advice that I was given when we first started thinking about who our next leader would be is: Try not to choose someone either in opposition of or in complete emulation of the leader before. Try to think through the problem without either looking for the same person or looking for the opposite of that person. And we've tried hard to do that. Dr. Hutchings has a larger-than-life personality, and he inspired lots of reactions among different people, so we tried to focus on the core of what the work was, and to look for someone who would continue the work. As you know, we're at the end of a five-year strategic plan, and so the question is — what are those next steps? How much of that have we actually finished, and how much remains to be done?

**“We're, in some ways, a small town, and we need to keep that in mind — that what happens in any corner affects every other corner.”**

**What did you and/or other board members discuss with Dr. Wilkins immediately after the community meeting?**

We essentially had a debrief about what had happened and what we would need to do, following that. To address, what had been, obviously, in the audience and on the stage. There needed to be a response in the high school. Dr. Glasner was here, so we heard from him a little bit about what he intended to do to make sure that he connected with all the students involved, that the teachers and other folks



that were clearly upset at the end of the evening — you need to build trust, and then you're able to understand where things need to be addressed.

So, we talked about what specifically should happen in this building, we talked about whether or not it was wise to even try to address the community or whether we needed a couple days to do that. We talked about what impact it might have on our short-term and medium-term operations. The stuff that happened was focused on the high school, and the conversations really all led there — so, what does that building need? We heard early on that there might be a student group coming together to facilitate a conversation, and we were very glad to hear that. Board members attended that. I think it's sort of — how do you set a framework for a conversation after people have gotten very upset about something, so those were kind of the boundaries

around which we were thinking — how do you move forward? How do you begin to have a conversation, so that you understand what actions need to be taken? Not everyone there, who was upset, was upset for the same reason.

**How did the events of the last school year influence the board's criteria for the next superintendent, if at all?**

We have a young board — three board members who are just starting their second year of service. And, in a way, it threw us together and forced us to develop a chemistry that you don't normally get on a board that quickly. So, I actually think it, unexpectedly, helped us work through what can be a very challenging process — to decide what you're looking for in a superintendent. What's the firm that you're going to use to help you search? What should





**More than 900** students, staff and community members filled the high school's large auditorium for the Nov. 8 meeting. Isaacs sits just left of center in a purple shirt and blazer. Beside him is board member Ayesha Hardaway. **Photo by David Vahey.**

the process be? All of those can be very contentious. Nobody runs for the board unless they really care about what happens with the schools, so everyone comes to the table with a lot of passion. I'm not sure that it radically changed who we were looking for, but it made it seem that much more important and immediate to us. Everyone's very invested in this process.

### **Will there be any incentives for budget cuts?**

It's a board decision — it hasn't been decided yet — but I think that there was certainly some resistance to having those sorts of things built into a previous contract, and we'll take that into consideration. It was, really, an incentive to find operational savings, and not broad budget cuts. Dr. Hutchings was not going to get paid for firing teachers. That was not part of the contract or an arrangement or

an expectation.

### **What will the board ask Dr. Glasner to focus on?**

Certainly finances and budget, and the future of our physical plant. We need to be sustainable into the future, so we're going to ask the person to examine that. But, I think the primary thing is building a new strategic plan that incorporates the work that has not yet been accomplished, or that is in process still. We certainly are interested in taking on — the equity task force has been at work, and we have a new equity policy, so we'll need to respond to that.

We want someone who can work with our community and help us to all get there together. We're a fascinating district for a new superintendent candidate, in that most districts are not balanced in the





**Isaacs emphasized the** unexpected upside to the turbulent end of 2018. “In a way, it threw us together and forced us to develop a chemistry that you don’t normally get on a board that quickly,” he said. **Photo by David Vahey.**

way that we are, in terms of the composition of our student body and our community. Wealth and income, race and other ethnic backgrounds. So, all of those contending forces create a need for someone to be solving a bunch of issues at once. So, when you talk about something like, “What are the goals?” — they’re so varied. And they really are pretty well laid out in the work that we’ve been doing.

**Arbitration with the SHTA over Ms. Podl’s administrative leave won’t conclude until mid-April, it’s estimated. How does the board plan to facilitate a rebuilding of trust between teachers and administration, especially with brand new administration?**

I think it’s on our whole community to help with

that. We’ll have a new person sitting in the corner of the office in the administration building, and we’ll do our part to facilitate meetings and do our part where we can, to help out, but it’s really going to come down to all of us inviting that new person in, and giving them a chance, and getting to know them. The person will come in with a hundred day plan that will include circulating, getting to know people. In the superintendent selection process, we included some teachers in December when we did this public engagement piece. We went out of our way to make sure that everyone was invited to come and share with us what they thought we need from the next leader. We’ve had plenty of conversations with the teachers’ association, informally, when possible, to understand what their concerns are, and try to accommodate those as best we can.



## **What have you learned from your conversations with the SHTA?**

A lot of it, I already had an inkling was true. So, it's more about reorganizing the sense of what is important in those conversations, and the sense of urgency to deal with things. They revolve around making sure everyone understands procedures, processes on both sides.

You heard all the same things I did — people want clarity on certain things. Some have been addressed, some will be addressed in summer learning opportunities. Some will be addressed because we have a new person in the superintendent's chair.

## **Has or will the district create a standard for placing a staff member on leave?**

Those are, again, operational decision-making trees. And while we're all very interested in what those are, ultimately it rests in the hands of the principal, assistant principal, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and the superintendent. So, we want to know that those things have been cleared up on both sides. That's kind of the board's interest: let us know that you've worked through this and that everyone understands what the process is. Some of them are suitable for putting it down on a piece of paper; others are definitions that the circumstances are so incredibly wide and varied that you couldn't possibly begin to write down every single instance.

It's very situational. We've asked a ton of questions about how this works, how this might work, and ultimately, it's extremely dependent on what actually happened in a particular circumstance.

## **If there is no standard, how will teachers know their limits, and be able to teach freely?**

I think, honestly, that our teachers already do an excellent job of knowing where those limits are. I think it's when something happens that's unexpected that people begin to get nervous. If, from your

perspective, you don't agree with the judgment, then it calls your attention to it. So, at those margins, we probably need to continue to have those conversations. I think everyone would agree that this happens very, very rarely.

So, do we want to make sure that there isn't an enormous misunderstanding or disagreement over something like this? Absolutely. How do you get there? It's probably not by writing down every single possible iteration of it. It's probably more dependent on the issues we talked about earlier of trust and understanding that each side is coming to the table and bringing the value of fairness and openness about it. So, that's what we're working toward.

## **Finally — what does the board want to focus on, short-term and long-term, for the district?**

Short-term is to bring a great superintendent in here, who can do the things listed in our leadership profile, but who also is going to build and sustain a phenomenal team. That includes building the chemistry — we need to get that person in the door, established, help them gain a greater understanding of who we are and to appreciate all the things we have that are working really, really well.

We talked before about needing someone who can help us move forward and improve as a district in general. I mean, we do have areas that we're focused on for improvement and areas that we're incredibly proud of. You want to make sure that you go after those areas that need support, without at all diminishing the things that we already do really well.

The building relationships and investing in them is extremely important. They've just got to be able to bring people together, and I think that's one of the key elements. Bring people together in a direction, and we will mutually work toward what that direction needs to be, in the medium-term. We're counting on the judgment of the person that comes in, as well, to tell us, "This is really a two-year project rather than a six-month one," so some of that remains to be negotiated with the new leader.



RAIDER ZONE



# RESPECT, AND SOME SUGGESTIONS







# Athletes admire their coaches and offer ways to enhance relationships

Ezra Marks Raider Zone Reporter



**S**tudent-athletes spend more time with their coaches than with almost any other adult.

In-season practices for high school sports range from two to four hours, and players practice up to six days per week.

The role of Shaker's coaches has come under scrutiny in the past year after coaching changes took place in football, cheerleading, men's lacrosse, women's basketball, crew and softball. The head football coach, Jarvis Gibson, resigned after the district discovered Jonathan Harrell, who had a criminal record, had been serving as a volunteer coach. Two cheerleading coaches were placed on leave and later resigned after a cheerleader accused them of body-shaming her.

In addition, the head men's lacrosse coach, Jason Griffith, resigned last spring. Denise Duncan, the former head women's basketball coach, stepped down for personal reasons in February. Kristen Harter, the former softball head coach, and Bob Valerian, former head crew coach, also stepped down last season.

Amid so much turnover in the coaching ranks, The Shakerite interviewed 24 student-athletes, spanning 20 sports, with the aim of characterizing players' relationships with their coaches. Thirteen of these athletes play more than one sport. Eleven of

**Above, field hockey coaches high five a player before a game. Below, a baseball coach demonstrates proper technique. Photos by David Vahey.**

the sources were male; 13 were female. Athletes interviewed remain anonymous throughout the story, and identifying information, such as coach names and sports, has been removed from students' responses.

There were three areas of focus: student-athletes' expectations and hopes for their coaches, their experiences and, finally, their reflections.

The Shakerite began by asking students about their expectations. What do you want in a coach? Predictably, students said coaches should be technically proficient in the sport, communicate and motivate well and know how to plan.

"I want a coach that brings the best out of all the players and can practice hard," one senior male said. "The coach needs to be able to provide motivation as well as good game planning."

Another senior male said, "The point of a coach is to help us get better" and "teach us the principles" of a sport.

However, most of the responses transcended athletics.

"The most important thing about a coach is that you can talk to him openly," the senior continued.

"Ultimately," said one junior male, "we want lessons that can be applied to everyday life," such as leadership skills.

"I want my coach to be understanding of the students," said the same athlete. "High school can be stressful at times. They need to make sure we shape out to be good kids, and they need to teach us leadership skills."

"I would describe a good player-to-coach relationship as being able to laugh and joke with a player, but also be able to push them to give all they can give," one senior male answered. "A good relationship with a coach is understanding what each other's goals are and helping each other to achieve them, and those goals can be both on and off the field."

A senior female added that coaches should organize "more team bonding activities. Most of the issues in our team don't spring from the lack of athleticism or knowledge of the game; it comes from the lack of trust amongst players."

The Shakerite also asked athletes how they think

a coach could better meet their expectations. Responses included diverse recommendations, such as motivational communication and being more understanding of one another.

One senior female said, "My coach is good technically and has a good plan," but "should work on communication with the team." She said her coach "has always struggled to really motivate us and make us feel like we're good enough, which has been especially hard to deal with in such a demanding sport."

"I would implement mental training to help calm nerves and make [athletes] confident," the same senior female added. She said a significant part of her sport requires "getting out of your head and just believing in yourself, and I believe that this is something that could definitely improve if we took the time to work on it."

Todd Corbin, a sports psychologist based in Warrensville Heights who has practiced for more than 20 years, examined the interview responses. "The biggest thing I picked up was it seemed like the coaches were more focused on the physical skills," he said, "and they just didn't spend enough time on mental skills and understanding the athletes more."

"Every athlete that is a professional, even a lot of successful collegiate players and coaches, all say the same thing. Everything is 80-90 percent mental, 10-20 percent skill," Corbin said.

Athletes also talked about practice, including workouts, coaches' attitudes and preparation.

"I think I would focus on more drills that include more of the team," one senior female said. "We spend a lot of time doing one-on-ones," so all but two players are watching at times during practice.

One junior female said adding variety to workouts would help. "It would be good to switch things up, instead of doing the same thing," she said.

"I would probably yell a little less at the players, so you don't decrease a certain player's confidence during practice. You want the players to reach their maximum ability," one junior male said.

"Some coaches don't spend enough time creating a team culture," said Corbin. "A lot of that has to do with time constraints. As a coach you have to understand, what is my intention? What do they want? What do you want to have these athletes accom-





David Vahey



Camille Lamb



David Vahey

plish by the end of the season?”

Most athletes said their coaches prepared them well for competition.

“I really love our coaches, gameplanning-wise,” said a junior female. “They will spend days before the game watching film all day and preparing. We all know, as players, how much work they put into winning and being great.”

“I thought our coach did well gameplanning for games. We watched a lot of film and practiced our game plans in practice. I felt prepared,” a junior male said.

A senior male offered a different perspective. “We lacked knowledge going into games and we never watched film together on the other team,” he said. The coach’s game plan “wasn’t the best. We would watch film on our mistakes instead of the other team’s.”

The athletes also discussed daily practice conditions, including coach conduct and workouts. Some described positive experiences and interactions.

“They are constantly brainstorming new drills and formations and tactics to take us further,” said one senior female. “They put in a lot of work outside of practice and always come prepared.”

Another senior female said her coach “does well at reminding us to focus on the little things in our technique every day, and holding us accountable about giving our all in every practice.”

“I like being coached by my coach, because when I’m confused on a play, she’ll go over it until I understand it. She knows what’s best,” one sophomore female said.

“They will come into practice with specified drills every week for each opponent,” said one junior female. “It’s the little details they put in that makes you want to try hard and be competitive.”

One junior male said that in his sport, coaches have to help players cope with failure. “You have to know that seven to eight out of 10 times, you’re going to fail. He does a good job in mentally preparing us,” a junior male said.

Other athletes talked about times when practices featured tough experiences, challenges and criticisms.

One junior male described occurrences of his

coach yelling at others. “When he lost his temper, he went off. There were a few times where, after a few tough losses last year, he would get really pissed. He would punish us with running sometimes,” he said.

“[Our coach] is very intense,” said a freshman female, and “not afraid to yell, he’s not afraid to scream and he’s not afraid to call you out.”

Another freshman female said, “Sometimes, they are not sympathetic to injuries or setbacks.” She described an instance at practice when she experienced a health problem. “I told the coach I couldn’t run, and they got upset,” she said.

“Our coaching style, practices and gameplanning was not good enough to get us through the Greater Cleveland Conference. I think if we had a different coach, we would have had a completely different season,” said a senior male.

Some athletes were critical of their coaches’ efforts during contests. One senior female said, “My senior year, a lot of players were playing in positions they weren’t comfortable in, and we struggled winning some games we should have.”

“I feel like my coach does good in preparation for the game, but sometimes struggles with certain in-game decisions, and sometimes, his actions in-game conflict with practice actions,” said one junior male.

Another junior male said parents agreed that his coach “was a hothead. They really only saw him at games where he would be yelling. When he lost his temper, he went off.”

Other athletes, however, expressed respect for their coaches’ actions during competition.

“They believed in us when we didn’t even believe in ourselves,” said one junior female. “The first game we lost last season, coach said, ‘You walked in here with your heads down talking about how good the other team and is how much we suck. Nothing stopped you from giving your all today. Nothing but yourselves.’”

“They make the best players play,” one junior male said. “One thing I can depend on is coach taking me out of the game if I’m screwing up. They don’t care if you’re a freshman or a senior.” You will only play “if you deserve it.”

Student-athletes also talked about the demands of academics and athletics. Some said striking a





**An assistant baseball coach watches his players from outside the bullpen.**

**Photo by David Vahey.**

with coaches. “If kids are stressed, they’re not going to have a solid foundation

when they’re playing the sport, and they’re not going to get along with the coach. They’re not going to have much fun at all. Whatever the coach can do to help the student athlete bring about more enjoyment is very important,” Corbin said.

In all 24 interviews, athletes spoke positively about their coaches. Though some expressed criticism, none expressed a wish for their coach to be replaced, even if the teams struggled to win.

One junior female reflected on her feelings of doubt and her coaches’ role in alleviating them. “I was one of the people saying that we were going to lose. Sometimes I still have doubts about my team, even [my sport] in general, but I can always rely on my coaches to remind me why I go to practice every day, why I put in 110 percent effort in games; why I play [the sport] in general.”

A senior male reflected on a bad experience with his coach. “Personally, my relationship with him was bumpy — one moment, it was good terms, the other it won’t be. We had a bad relationship sometimes. Sometimes I would go a week without talking to him. I sometimes could not open up to him. I wasn’t comfortable with him sometimes,” he said. “I did respect him though,” he added.

“Coaches have to build trust with their athletes,” Corbin said. “It comes both ways. The coach has such an amazing opportunity to coach these young men and women. Understanding that it’s OK to mess up and lose sometimes is something that all coaches and student athletes should know.”

One senior female offered a more complex picture of her relationship with her coach. “Although my coach and I have our differences, he is family to me,” she said. “It’s been hard getting through to him and making him understand what I need from him as my coach, but I still really value everything he’s done for me. I’m really going to miss him once I’m done [with my sport] for good.”

*Raider Zone Editor Ben Cox contributed reporting.*

balance can be a challenge. “I would perhaps allow for more time for after-school conference activities, because sometimes there is not always time to get all academic needs finished,” one junior male said.

“It was very hard as a player, coming home around 7:45 every night, and then having to eat and shower, so I was usually starting my homework around 8:45,” said another junior male. “For someone who is an athlete, I try to be in bed by 10:30 every night, but that is very stressful when there is only an hour and 45-minute slot to do homework.”

Corbin added insight to time management for an athlete, especially for upperclassmen. “It can be difficult to balance everything — a lot of juniors want to get into a good school. ‘I want a scholarship, I want a good GPA, I want to get a high score on the ACT and SAT.’ All of this adds to the athletes’ pressures.”

Corbin shared the story of an athlete who struggled with pressure. “I know a girl who was a state champion-caliber athlete. But she lost all enjoyment from competing,” he said. “She could have really excelled tremendously in college, even olympic quality potential. There was too much pressure put on her, and she didn’t know how to handle it.”

These pressures can harm players’ relationships



Harrell is pictured in the top row, fourth from the left, alongside other coaches on the 2018 football team. Photo by Motophoto.

# PAID OR NOT, OHIO COACHES MUST PASS BACKGROUND CHECKS

*Questions remain about how a volunteer continued to work with the football team after pleading guilty to a felony in 2015*

Anna Krouse Raider Zone Editor

The Nov. 8 Shaker community meeting raised questions about the then recent resignation of head football coach Jarvis Gibson, which occurred after a volunteer assistant coach, Jonathan Harrell, was found to have a disqualifying criminal record.

Midway through the meeting, an audience member asked,

“What is the process of hiring a football coach, or I guess, any coach? Who’s in charge of that? As the process is for hiring assistant coaches, how did the process break down in your view?”

Interim Superintendent Dr. Stephen Wilkins explained that the district would hire a new coach and emphasized the impor-

tance of making sure that adults who work with students are properly sanctioned and licensed.

“We will ensure that that happens in the future,” he said.

Several audience members were still eager for answers and responded by yelling, “How?” at the large auditorium stage.

“We have drafted a job descrip-



tion and will revise that. I'm working with the athletic director, who is responsible for the interviews of those candidates. Those candidates will be vetted, strictly, and we will raise the standards and expectations of the coaching staff. Stay tuned," Wilkins concluded.

Five months later, the district still has not released any information about how Jonathan Harrell, as a volunteer coach, avoided the kind of scrutiny Wilkins described.

According to Board of Education meeting minutes, Harrell was hired as an assistant football coach via supplemental contracts for the 2011, 2012 and 2013 football seasons. Gibson assumed head coaching duties at Shaker in 2011.

According to the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court docket, Harrell was charged Sept. 16, 2014 with petty theft, disrupting public service, endangering children, domestic violence, abduction and attempted rape. Harrell spent 20 days in Cuyahoga County Jail, from the day he was arrested to Oct. 6, 2014. He was released on a \$100,000 bond.

On April 1, 2015, Harrell pleaded guilty to abduction, and every other charge was dropped. Finally, on June 15, 2015, Harrell was sentenced to 180 days in jail and was credited for the time spent there the year before.

On Oct. 22, 2015, while serving his sentence, Harrell was additionally charged with aggravated theft and possessing criminal tools for an offense allegedly committed Jan. 23, 2015.

“Those  
candidates will  
be vetted,  
strictly, and we  
will raise the  
standards and  
expectations  
of the coaching  
staff.”

Stephen Wilkins,  
*interim superintendent*

He pleaded guilty to attempting to possess criminal tools and received a lesser charge of 134 days in jail; the other two charges were dropped. The judge ruled that these 134 days would be considered part of Harrell's previous sentence, and he was given no additional time.

Harrell was released Nov. 22, 2015. A search of Board of Education meeting minutes found no evidence that Harrell was awarded a contract for any position at any time after 2013. Two senior football players said that Harrell served as a volunteer coach for the 2016 and 2017 seasons as well.

On Oct. 28, 2018, an email was sent to football players and their parents stating, “Varsity Football Coach Jarvis Gibson has resigned his head coaching duties effective Friday, October 26, 2018.”

Both Harrell and Gibson were gone for the remainder of the football season.

On Feb. 19, 2018, shaker.org published a brief release announcing the hiring of South Euclid Brush assistant coach Alex Nicholson as head football coach after an “extensive interview process that included a panel of teachers, administrators, counselors and parents (Middle School and High School), alumni and current and former Shaker football players.”

Unlike teachers and administrators, high school and middle school coaches in Ohio do not have to have licenses to obtain jobs. However, the Ohio Department of Education requires that all paid – and volunteer – coaches obtain a Pupil Activity Permit to

achieve an OHSAA Coach Certification.

To receive the permit, individuals who want to coach a school team must complete the National Federation of State High School Association’s fundamentals of coaching class. They must complete CPR certification, first aid or sports injury prevention training and concussion prevention training. All coaches must also complete sudden cardiac arrest training.

Finally, all potential coaches — contracted and volunteer — must pass Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Federal Bureau of Investigation background checks, to be requested by districts that intend to employ them or for which a coach intends to volunteer.

It is still unclear how Harrell was able to serve as a volunteer coach after pleading guilty and serving a sentence for abduction and attempting to possess criminal

Before his 2014 arrest, Harrell was on the district payroll and coached during a 2013 game against University School, pictured below.



After Felony Plea and Sentence, Harrell Returned as Volunteer Coach

<b>September 2014</b> Harrell is arrested and goes to jail for 20 days on charges of petty theft, disrupting public service, endangering children, domestic violence, abduction and attempted rape.	<b>April 2015</b> Harrell pleads guilty to abduction; the other charges are dropped.	<b>June 2015</b> Harrell is sentenced to 180 days in jail and credited for his time served in September.	<b>October 2015</b> Harrell is charged with an offense that occurred in January 2015 which included aggravated theft and possessing criminal tools.	<b>November 2015</b> Harrell is released from jail.
--	---	---	--	--



nal tools.

The abrupt decision to place Gibson on leave before the 2018 football season ended suggests the district was unaware of Harrell's volunteer participation and his criminal record until somehow learning of it in October 2018.

The Shakerite emailed questions about Harrell's involvement with the football team and the process of hiring a coach to Athletic Director Don Readance and Executive Director of Communications Scott Stephens March 12.

In the email, we asked: What is the process that the district uses when hiring a head coach? What does the district look for in a head coach? Is the hiring process for head coaches the same for volunteer and assistant coaches? If not, how is it different? Who is in charge of hiring coaches at the high school? Jonathan Harrell was hired as a coach before he was convicted; was he originally hired using the same process as other assistant coaches? After he was released from jail, Mr. Harrell came back to coach, but he was not on the payroll — how was Mr. Harrell able to continue working on the football staff without the administration knowing he was there? Was anyone aware that he was coaching? Do you have any recommendations of other sources

we can talk to about the hiring process for coaches?

This email received an acknowledgement from Stephens but no responses to questions.

**“I thought John was a really good person. Honestly, if you would have talked to him for, like, an hour, you would never assume he had a criminal record.”**

**Carson Fowler**  
*sophomore*

A second email was sent to Stephens March 15 requesting responses to the original questions and these additional questions: How did that district find out that Mr. Harrell was coaching in

the 2018 season? What process lead to him officially leaving the coaching staff last fall? This email received no response.

A final email to Stephens sent March 27 included all the questions. Stephens responded March 28 and said: “The reality is we didn't know he was there working with kids because he was not on our payroll. As soon as it was brought to our attention, he was gone and the head coach was gone. Dr. Wilkins took care of a situation that needed to be corrected. It was corrected.”

Carson Fowler, a member of the football team, said he was surprised when learned that Gibson and Harrell both left the team.

“I thought John was a really good person. Honestly, if you would have talked to him for like an hour, you would never assume he had a criminal record,” Fowler said.

Fowler also said that two other assistant coaches left the team as well because they thought it was unfair for Gibson and Harrell to be forced out.

The Shakerite contacted Gibson by phone. He said that he was not willing to comment on his resignation last fall. The Shakerite called Harrell three times. He has not yet responded to voice-mail messages seeking comment.

Harrell serves as a volunteer coach alongside Gibson for the 2016, 2017 and 2018 seasons.

**August 2018**  
Football season begins

**October 2018**  
District places Gibson on administrative leave and Harrell is asked to stop coaching.

## What I Learned in Spanish Class

There are few things I hate more than miscommunicating. It doesn't matter if my words are misinterpreted or my tone is misunderstood — it infuriates me all the same. For this reason, I loathed Spanish class.

Spanish was the bane of my existence during sophomore year. My accent was awful, I relentlessly confused the vocab and I goofed off in class. Instead of blaming my own work ethic however, I demonized my Spanish teacher.



Adonis Fryer  
senior

As a sophomore, I attributed my poor test results to her harsh grading, and not my ardent refusal to study. Every time she marked something wrong, my antagonism grew. Progressively, Spanish became my second-least favorite class, with only math ranked below it.

I considered her such a villain that one time, at home, I stubbed my toe while looking for my AP U.S. History book and yelled, “Thanks a lot, Señora!” Partially, I was joking, but at that time, she was the enemy in my high school narrative.

My negativity faded only

after one conference period the Tuesday before Thanksgiving break. I still remember feeling anxious in her classroom as I desperately awaited the holiday. My bottled-up pessimism wasn't relieved until she asked me, “What does your family do for Thanksgiving?”

At first, I was taken aback because she didn't ask me in Spanish, and while my teacher wasn't mean, I didn't believe that she'd be interested in what I was doing for the holidays — especially because I bombed my presentation the day before. But, I decided to relax and just chat with her.

Through our conversation, my cold image of her melted. I began to see that we both valued God and our families, and while we liked different foods for the holidays, we both had an appreciation for home-cooked meals. In that moment, I wasn't talking to my Spanish teacher, but to a woman who is a loving mother to her daughters, and, ultimately, a human being.

After that conference, I no longer felt anxious in class, and I came to conferences not just for assistance, but for conversation. I still was terrible at Spanish, especially after the class got harder, but it no longer was the bane of sophomore Adonis's existence.

Now, this experience wasn't enough to convince me not to drop Spanish for the rest of high school, but it did help me understand that at the core of

student-teacher relationships, there needs to be an emphasis on humanity.

I know it seems like common sense that we're all composed of the same materials, but that can be easily lost in the heat of the school year. School is something that can often get in the way of our personal pursuits, and getting a bad grade can turn a good day into a disaster. It's important to connect on a personal level, separate from academics.

As students, we must separate hatred of a subject from the teacher presenting it, and teachers need to separate their perception of a mediocre student from a bad kid. This isn't to say we should be dishonest with one another about our performances, but rather that we could all be more understanding. Just as we have struggles in sports, drama with high school relationships or exhaustion from our jobs, teachers do as well. Teachers have families to go home to, and personal aspirations and distractions of their own — just because they stand in front of the class, instead of sitting at our desks, doesn't mean that they don't understand us or that we can't empathize with them.

Ultimately, we're all human beings. We all make mistakes, and none of us likes to be disrespected or embarrassed. If we can all be cognizant of our shared humanity and place our similarities above our differences, then we'll have a stronger learning environment.



# Mutual Respect, Mutual Learning

I am now completing my fourth year here at Shaker, and 16th overall of teaching. While many policies, goals and administrators have come and gone, there remains one constant that has been preached to me and my fellow educators: Create good relationships with your students. It has been explicitly stated in the initial meeting almost every year I've been in this profession.



Bryan Elsaesser  
social studies teacher

And while I agree it is essential to build positive relationships in a classroom, we're rarely given much guidance on how to do so, or given a clear definition of what that explicitly means or how it would look in class. We as educators are used to this type of edict on high — and I have no doubt that we would all agree with this principle in theory — but it is almost always left to the educator to figure out what building relationships looks like in our classrooms.

My primary goal in the classroom is to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is important to be honest and genuine with your students. Never talk down

to your students. Have empathy for their experiences and background.

Treat your students as individuals, and try to figure out what works for them as individuals. Try to be consistent and patient as you can be.

Personally, I use my sense of humor to create a positive environment and lighten the mood. In the end, I want to create a classroom where a student feels comfortable learning. They should feel like we are teammates and not adversaries. I've always tried to treat students like adults — until they show that they cannot handle it, and I have to revert to a more directive approach.

While it is important for teachers to create a positive environment in class, it is equally important to remember that a relationship is a two-way street. No matter what a teacher does, a good relationship requires effort and respect from the student side as well.

A student must enter a classroom and assist in creating a positive classroom environment, understanding that the teacher has the student's best interest in mind. If you approach an adult with your headphones on, staring at your phone, ignoring directions and being generally disrespectful, can you expect to receive respect in return?

Rules exist to create a safe, orderly environment where

everyone can learn, and if you disrupt that, you cannot expect to be treated as an adult.

One of my former colleagues would tell students, "If I stop trying to get you to pay attention or let you slack off, it means that I've given up on you. So, my actions mean that I still believe that you can succeed in my class." So, sometimes when you think we are giving you a hard

*When you think we are giving you a hard time, we are actually showing that we still believe in you and want you to succeed. We show this by setting a high standard for you to strive for, which, hopefully, will bring out your best work.*

time, we are actually showing that we still believe in you and want you to succeed. We show this by setting a high standard for you to strive for, which, hopefully, will bring out your best work.

Yes, teachers may have different methods and expectations, but in the end we all have the same goal — to help students succeed in our classes.

## Shaker Wifi: A How-To Guide

By Brian Love

To connect to the new Shaker Heights City Schools Wi-Fi system, just follow the simple steps below.

1) In the network connection settings of your device, select the SHCS\_WIFI network and click Connect.

2) Open your web browser. Nothing will happen. This is normal. Close your web browser and open your SMS messaging app. Text, "I sure do love learning" to 216-867-SCHOOL.

3) You will receive an email containing the district's Acceptable Use Policy. Read it carefully. There will be a quiz. Reply to the email with the codeword CONDOR and wait 4-8 business days.

4) Eventually, you will be contacted by a man known only as "The Condor." Ask him if he's seen the movie "A Star is Born." He will give you a small pouch of magic beans.

5) Bring the beans to the old oak tree by the river. Travel south until you see a barn. Knock on the back door and ask to borrow Charlie's van. Promise to return it.

6) Drive up to Lake Erie at midnight. Toss the pouch of beans into the lake, and be careful not to let the beans see moonlight. Return home.

7) Sleep under the branches of a Sycamore tree. You will dream of a Frost Wolf blocking your path. You must slay the beast to pass by it. The Shakerite cannot help you in this battle — you must use your wits alone. Be warned: If you die in the dream, you die in real life.

8) If you best the wolf, awaken, and you'll find your phone screen open to a website. Log in with your Shaker username and password. You are now connected to the SHCS\_WIFI network for 12 hours. After 12 hours, you will need to re-connect.

## POSSIBLE SCENES AFTER THE CREDITS OF AVENGERS ENDGAME

- + **Rocket Raccoon** meets a regular raccoon and screams for five full minutes
- + **The Avengers berate** Starlord for that moronic move on Titan
- + **Thor, after his axe is broken** in the final battle, getting a new weapon: a chainsaw
- + **We finally touch base** with Pepper Potts. How's she doing? What's she been up to?



**DOWNLOAD THE  
SHAKERITE APP\***

*\*for iOS devices;  
Android app coming  
soon*



### HEARD IN THE HALLS



"I mean, seriously, who needs Jordans when you can have wheelies?" Jan. 24, 4:17 p.m.

"Wait, Wyoming is a state?" Feb. 11, 1:13 p.m.

"Build a wall? With what bricks?" Feb. 20, 3:11 p.m.

"I'm so tired, I can't even spread the cream cheese on my bagel." March 12, 7:54 a.m.